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No. 41

N° 41

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Monday 29 January 1996

Lundi 29 janvier 1996



Speaker
Honourable Allan K. McLean

Président
L'honorable Allan K. McLean

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 29 January 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 29 janvier 1996

*The House met at 1003.
Prayers.*

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Mr Carroll from the standing committee on general government presented the following report and moved its adoption:

Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 26, An Act to achieve Fiscal Savings and to promote Economic Prosperity through Public Sector Restructuring, Streamlining and Efficiency and to implement other aspects of the Government's Economic Agenda / *Projet de loi 26, Loi visant à réaliser des économies budgétaires et à favoriser la prospérité économique par la restructuration, la rationalisation et l'efficacité du secteur public et visant à mettre en oeuvre d'autres aspects du programme économique du gouvernement.*

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Shall the report be received and adopted?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Pursuant to the standing order of the House, December 12, 1995, the bill is ordered for third reading.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAVINGS AND RESTRUCTURING ACT, 1995 LOI DE 1995 SUR LES ÉCONOMIES ET LA RESTRUCTURATION

Mr Wilson moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 26, An Act to achieve Fiscal Savings and to promote Economic Prosperity through Public Sector Restructuring, Streamlining and Efficiency and to implement other aspects of the Government's Economic Agenda / *Projet de loi 26, Loi visant à réaliser des économies budgétaires et à favoriser la prospérité économique par la restructuration, la rationalisation et l'efficacité du secteur public et visant à mettre en oeuvre d'autres aspects du programme économique du gouvernement.*

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It is my understanding that there is an agreement among all three parties to split the time evenly throughout the debate on third reading, both in the morning and in the afternoon.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I am pleased to spend a few moments to further explain this historic piece of legislation. In particular, as Minister of Health for the province, I appreciate the opportunity to further explain the health provisions of Bill 26 during this third reading debate.

Before I begin to explain further some of the details of the bill, I'd like to thank my parliamentary assistant, Helen Johns, the MPP for Huron, and the other two health committee members, Tony Clement and Janet Ecker, who, along with members of the opposition, worked very hard to try to make some improvements, some amendments to this legislation to ensure that the bill reflected the intent of the government and the policy of the government.

I'm briefly going to go through the four main health sections of Bill 26 and explain what we have before us today. The Savings and Restructuring Act provides this government with the means to complete the restructuring of the province's hospital system. Previous governments initiated local planning efforts for system-wide change, but left behind no mechanism to make sure the job was completed.

Without the measures in Bill 26, the past several years of restructuring planning may have amounted to a very costly and frustrating exercise for many Ontario communities. At best, it could have resulted in a provincial patchwork of local hospital restructurings without an eye for the system as a whole. Bill 26 establishes the Health Services Restructuring Commission, a body which will be able to assist those many communities that have undergone very detailed planning processes in order to make their communities' hospital systems more efficient and sustainable.

The government, through the hospital restructuring commission, will have the ability to bring about the changes that are identified through the district health council reports of local communities and, whether it be closing, merging or amalgamating or redefining hospitals as reflected in those studies, the commission will be able to act on those studies.

An amendment was accepted to make it absolutely clear that the commission and the powers of the minister would sunset in four years, would cease to exist in four years. Also, an amendment was made to ensure that the commission couldn't go off and do its own thing, but that it had to have regard to the district health council studies.

The idea of a health system restructuring commission was not the government's idea. The previous government, millions of dollars and thousands of hours of volunteer time later, set in motion a process where district health councils study their local hospital communities. We are

expecting, this year and through the early part of 1997, that some 50 restructuring reports from the local volunteer groups will be coming forward to this government. Bill 26 puts in place a mechanism to deal with it.

It was my firm opinion and that of the district health council in Metropolitan Toronto, after reading their report and discussions with the Ontario Hospital Association, that had we let the status quo prevail, we might not have been able to move with hospital restructuring this year. We know from the Finance minister's announcement that it's absolutely crucial that a system-wide restructuring be done and that the politics in terms of hospital restructuring be taken out of the system and handed to a more arm's-length commission, called the Health Services Restructuring Commission.

1010

I'm pleased to remind all members that after the couple of amendments to this section, the Ontario Hospital Association put out both a press release and a letter to me indicating that it's very pleased. In fact, they say that we did get it right in the legislation. I want to thank both the Ontario Hospital Association and the Catholic Health Association of Ontario for their help.

The people in the system—the hospital administrators, the members of the Ontario Hospital Association—have taken a very, very responsible approach to the restructuring that must occur to truly bring about a hospital system in Metro Toronto and across the province. Some of the discussions we've had I can tell you we would not have had three or four years ago, but reality has sunk in to all of us here with the fiscal problems we have in the province, with our commitment to preserve the health care budget at \$17.4 billion but also to make sure that money is freed up so that we can invest in long-term-care services.

We announced the community care access centres just last week, which will be that new window of access for consumers, for the people of this province to access those long-term-care services. We know through the district health council reports that much money will have to be pumped into the long-term-care community-based service side as hospital restructuring and reconfigurations proceed over the next few years.

I want to thank those hospital leaders who have been very, very responsible in their discussions with the ministry, in their discussions with the opposition parties. I appreciate the tone and certainly their intent to get the job done and stop studying the system to death. That's something we hope to be able to do in 1996 and 1997.

Another section, schedule G of the bill, dealt with copayments on the drug plan.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): User fees you weren't going to bring in. "No new user fees." Remember? What about all of those seniors who are not going to get drugs now as a result of that?

The Speaker: Order.

Hon Mr Wilson: Clearly, it's of interest when nine other provinces have copayments on their drug plans and nobody in those provinces—

Ms Lankin: That makes it okay? What about all those seniors in the province not getting health care as a result of it?

The Speaker: Order. The member for Beaches-Woodbine is out of order and she knows it.

Hon Mr Wilson: Other provinces have gone through this debate and today you do not find the people of those provinces calling the copayments on the drug plan "user fees." They are copayments. This government was confronted with the same tough challenge that the previous governments have had. The program has grown from the 1970s, from a relatively small program costing about \$100 million to a program today that is costing \$1.3 billion.

In just a few weeks and months, we as a government are going to have to deal with about two years of cuts from Mr Martin and Mr Chrétien, some \$1.4 billion perhaps in cuts to the health care budgets alone over the next 24 months. Unlike the previous government, which to deal with fiscal pressures on the drug plan delisted unilaterally, without public consultation, some 250 drugs, just took them right off the plan, we were faced with a similar decision: Do we continue to delist drugs behind closed doors, some of those very important cardiac drugs? If you meet with a group of seniors, which I did last week, and you say, "How many of you now are paying cash for the full cost of your drugs?" many of them will put their hands up, as a result of the 250 drug products that were delisted over the last year.

So that and the actions of the previous government to keep the program affordable have had a very direct effect. We were faced with the same situation. To keep it affordable, to keep it sustainable, a \$1.3-billion program in which 1.2 million Ontario residents benefit from that program, we are asking people to contribute in many cases a very small amount of \$2 towards sustaining that program.

Rather than have this debate that the opposition has had, I would like to know, and it would be interesting when they have the opportunity to debate today, what they would have done. Would they have continued to delist drugs behind closed doors and put 100% of the cost of those drug products on the backs of the poor, or would they have done what we did, which was to sustain the program, to make it more affordable and to take some of the savings from the new copayments and reinvest them to expand the base? Now for 140,000 working poor, those people who didn't quite qualify for the \$500 deductible and the Trillium drug program, we've lowered that deductible to \$350 so that no one in this province will be faced with catastrophic drug costs. So we expanded the base, brought in 140,000 other people and really saved the program and took a responsible approach, given that we do have some pretty serious cuts coming from the federal government in the next weeks and months. That's what we've done in the program.

In deregulating the drug industry, I want to explain to members how "best available price" is set now. Members would be aware that "best available price" can very often be a misnomer. Best available price is set by the manufacturers. They simply say, "Our law says that we will pay the best available price in Canada." If you have a manufacturer that raises the prices equally in all provinces, the best available price essentially is the manufacturer's set price. What we're saying is we want to move

away from BAP. We want to move to be a more aggressive purchaser, to have the best negotiated price, and to be able to challenge some of those manufacturers' prices.

We have had a freeze on drug prices for the last two years in this province. They're frozen again, by agreement of the manufacturers, to the end of this year. But prior to that, prior to the freezes, manufacturers used to come forward and say, "Well, we're going to jack up the price; the price increase will be 25%," do it across the provinces, so best available price became the new 25% level, and by law we would pay that.

Apparently, the previous government did ask every once in a while, "Why do you need the 25% increase?" by example, and manufacturers sometimes would say, "Well, we've decided to recover R and D costs over three or four years rather than 10 years, so here's the new price, and by the way, it's the new BAP for the nation." So you pay it.

Because we are the largest purchasers of drugs for seniors, through the ODB, through the formulary, we're going to be able to challenge price increases in the future and really see if we are getting the best available price. I think you'll find other provinces take our lead.

We also free up the cash market, so that institutions like Sick Kids, which is a large purchaser of paediatric drugs, will be able to exercise their muscle in the marketplace and be able to say, "Well, we don't accept your price increase" or "We think you can come in with a lower introductory price." They'll be able to exercise, as large purchasers, that purchasing power.

Also, we have committed as a government, as a matter of policy, to ensure that we keep monitoring prices over the next few years. We will keep the two people in the Ministry of Health who continue to monitor prices, because I do realize that at committee hearings it was split about 50-50 in terms of the opinion of the industry and pharmacists as to whether prices would go up or down. So we'll continue to monitor it, but we certainly intend to be—

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: To avoid frustration over the course of this day, some of us were present at the hearings, some of us know exactly what was said, and I would hope that the minister would be required to not mislead the public by presenting accurate information about evidence presented in that committee, since he was never there, not one day.

Hon Mr Wilson: They seem to be making new historical contexts. I sat through—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order, order. The member for Oriole is out of order. I would like to hear what the minister is saying.

Hon Mr Wilson: With respect to changes to the Health Insurance Act, which seems to have caught the attention of health care providers the most in presentations to the committee hearings, we are making changes so that we can better deal with fraud.

They've sent me a note saying I only have two or three minutes, but let's use the example of the physician who recently did a heart and lung transplant in his living room. Now, the good news is that apparently he didn't

also bill us for a house call. But the fact of the matter is that he did put that money in trust; he was trying to prove a point about how inefficient the system is now.

What does that example do for us in terms of the context of Bill 26? Had that physician, under current law without the changes to Bill 26, not come forward and said, "By the way, I owe you \$1,800; it was an inappropriate billing," had we not caught it in our computer system—clearly the forensic flags did not catch it this time, and we're investigating why that didn't happen, why we didn't catch—

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): You've got a lot of nerve as the minister to say that.

The Speaker: The member for Cochrane South.

1020

Hon Mr Wilson: We would not under current law be able to compel that physician to pay the \$1,800 without being dragged through the MRC and the health services appeal and judicial appeal. It's costing \$22,000 a case.

Mrs McLeod: Don't drag them through a provisional review; heaven forbid.

The Speaker: The Leader of the Opposition.

Hon Mr Wilson: Under Bill 26, where there is agreement, where it is the opinion of the general manager, for some services payment can be made. The media used to call that \$1,800 that the physician held the interest-free loan. Now we will collect that money where it is very clear, and in the opinion of the general manager, and again, all cleared with the CPSO.

We are not defining what doctors will do in their offices day after day. I remind people that the Canada Health Act leaves it up to the provinces to define medically necessary services. That is what ministers of health do in Canada—we define the whole range of services that medicare will pay for in this province. It differs from what medicare will pay for in other provinces, and nowhere in any law in Canada is medical necessity defined in law.

Bill 26, as amended, gives new and very substantial appeal that when the general manager of OHIP suspects, has an opinion, that a particular procedure was not medically necessary, again, that is referred to the Medical Review Committee of the College of Physicians and Surgeons. Physicians themselves—

Interjection.

Hon Mr Wilson: Yes, it is; for insured services, it is. Physicians themselves investigate physicians, as through the MRC, and in fact, the good news in Bill 26 is that because we withdrew OHIP inspectors—we listened and we said, "Okay, we don't need our own inspectors," but in exchange for that, the College of Physicians and Surgeons and the ministry were able to come up with a new expedited Medical Review Committee or practitioner review committee process.

Right now, sometimes when we have a relatively small amount of money in dispute between OHIP and a practitioner or a physician, they still have to go through the very long—it takes three years for the case to even be heard by the Medical Review Committee, and in the end, if they're found guilty, their names are published. Now, practitioners and physicians will have the opportunity to check off if they want to go through a new expedited

MRC. As one of the incentives to do that for relatively small amounts of collectibles, we won't publish their names—or we don't publish the name, the College of Physicians and Surgeons does. They'll have an expedited process so their lives aren't disrupted. Sometimes these things do boil down to a matter of opinion between the college investigators, the general manager and the actual physician, so we think that's a tremendous improvement. If I were the OMA, I'd be claiming a victory on this rather than continuing to slam the government. Because we listened to them, we listened to the College of Physicians and Surgeons, we will have a better, more fair system for the doctors of this province with respect to disputes over billings. It's a vast improvement and it's something that I'm very proud of that we were able to work through.

Mr Speaker, my time is up. We've worked very hard to get Bill 26 right. I think you'll find that the government will be able, on behalf of the taxpayers, to bring some good management into the health care system, which is what we're all about, and we'll have the tools to restructure that system and meet not only the financial needs of the province and the financial constraints that are on the province, but more importantly, we'll be able to better meet the patients' needs. We'll be better able to have a system, to plan for the future, to bring in our new information system so that we can catch the doctor who admits he inappropriately billed the system and we'll be able to do that in a far more commonsense fashion.

Mr Speaker, I thank all members for their very good attention to the remarks I just made.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): It has been some time now since I have, as you know, Mr Speaker, stood in my place. It's good to be back. I am so happy to be here. I feel like I could just stay here all night.

The last time I was here I was filled with a sense of outrage. I was outraged because I saw a system disappearing before my eyes. I saw government bullying its way, trying to mug the democratic process. I was outraged because I saw the government trying to shackle and muzzle any opposition to its blind adherence to an ideological agenda.

Bill 26 is about a lot of things. It's about taking money out of the pockets of the poorest Ontarians, putting user fees on drugs for the sick and the elderly, just so Mike Harris can deliver a tax bonanza to the wealthiest Ontarians. It's about telling middle-class Ontarians that they won't have to pay any tax increases, then opening up the door to hundreds upon hundreds of user fees, license fees and registration fees, from walking into a park to calling the police. Most of all, this bill is about shackling democracy—unbridled arrogance. It's about steamrolling over people's rights.

Democracy is a very cherished principle. To subvert real or substantive democracy is to be unaccountable to the people it represents. Real democracy calls for the respectful and sensitive use of the power achieved through the ballot.

Bill 26 shows us how easily the abuses of the past can be repeated in the present. The real intent of Bill 26 is to create conditions for the absolute reign of the business of the lords; the masters of this government. This is being

done in the name of the people and in the name of progress.

The enemies of progress, according to this government, are the poor, the unemployed, the elderly and the workers and their organizations. The social guarantees put in place to protect the most vulnerable in our midst, guarantees in which we measure the humanism and the civilized status of the people, are now seen as obstacles to this government's goal of absolute power for the rich.

The people of this province understand this. They recognize that this bill is a blow to democracy. That is why 30,000 teachers and parents marched to protest against this government at Queen's Park this month, that is why over 300 taxpayers gathered at Albert Campbell Collegiate in Scarborough to protest against this bill, and that is why 150 concerned citizens gathered in North Bay, the Premier's riding, to speak out on this vulgar haste and secrecy.

It was over 200 years ago that Thomas Jefferson wrote, "The tyranny of the legislature is really the danger the most to be feared." I'm going to repeat that because I want the members of the government to hear it and to understand it, "The tyranny of the legislature is really the danger the most to be feared."

Jefferson was warning us against governments using their majorities to bulldoze their way over the will of the people. He was warning us about the arrogance that even a popular elected government can have.

We have seen lots of arrogance in this government. We have seen the arrogance in Mike Harris who wanted to ram this legislation through without any hearings. This bill would have been law on December 14. We have seen the arrogance when Mike Harris told over 1,000 groups and individuals, "We don't have time to listen to your presentations." I saw the arrogance so clearly when Mike Harris and his ministers refused to appear before a legislative committee to explain this bill or answer questions about it or even to defend it.

1030

My colleagues and I have done everything we could to give the people a voice. We fought for public hearings and we have travelled across this province conducting our own hearings into Bill 26 while Jim Wilson was on vacation. I was in Windsor with my colleagues listening to auto workers talking about their fear and their personal medical records that would be invaded. While Al Leach was bunkered in his ministry, afraid to open his mouth and make yet another mistake, I was in St Thomas listening to mothers who feared for their children's education because they may not be able to afford user fees on library books. While Mike Harris was having his picture taken in front of the Taj Mahal, I was in North Bay listening to seniors talking about how they may have to choose between buying food or paying for medication with user fees. You've heard the phrase "Hobson's choice." This is Harris's choice: food or medication. Shame on you, Mr Harris, wherever you are.

The Tories have angered all decent Ontarians who have taken the time to understand Bill 26 and its terrible implications for doctors, nurses, teachers, firefighters, police officers, parents, and the list goes on and on and on. They're all united in the conviction that Bill 26

represents a monstrous erosion of rights and guarantees of the people of this province. Strangely, the Premier seems alone in not understanding what this bill says or what it means. Perhaps it was the devil who wrote this bill, since it reads like a document straight from hell.

The Tories have tried to stifle public debate on Bill 26 from the start, and you are quite a witness to that. They have denied the right to a hearing to hundreds and hundreds of Ontarians. I would like to read into the record just some of the individuals and groups who have been denied their right to give their input on this bill.

Before I do that, Mr Speaker, I want you to bring your attention to the fact that I've had thousands and thousands of petitions, and while this government has refused to receive petitions in this House, petition is one of the oldest traditions in our Parliament. We are denied to have petitions in this House today, and I have thousands of this petition here, which I would lay on the desk of the Clerk, because you refuse me and deny me the right to have those petitions, Mr Speaker. We know we have no pages, but I ask my colleague Mr Grandmaître if he could just drop this on the Clerk's desk.

These people have come to me this morning in the cold to say they want their voice to be heard, because thousands and thousands have not been heard. I will just read a few of these names, because if I should read those who were shut out—especially the mayor of Scarborough, who represents over 600,000 people and was refused to be heard, and yet you're going to give them permission in which to administer taxes.

The 5th Medium Regimental Association, Douglas Sword, was denied; Aberhart, Charles; Academy of Obstetrics; Administrators of Medium Public Libraries in Ontario, Jane Watkins; Aird and Berlis, Christopher Williams. The list goes on: Church in Society Committee, London Conference, United Church of Canada; CUPE Local 778; Francophone Community Health Centre; Halton Regional Coalition for Social Justice, Terry Kelly. These are lists, and these are some of the names I'm reading: Mental Health Rights Coalition of Hamilton; Ontario Association of Speech-Language Pathologists and Audiologists, William Hogle; Queensway Carlton Hospital or District Office of OMA—and you know the OMA was shut out from any consultation; St Joseph's Health Centre, Don McDermott; Zone 14 Senior, Orvel Kerr, and the list goes on.

Democracy has been hijacked by this dictatorial government. I say that I wish this province well and I hope sense will come to Mike Harris and many of his absent ministers who are not even here to listen to this.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: None of us has a copy of Bill 26. According to my reading of the standing orders, it says, "When a bill has been amended in any committee it shall be reprinted as the Clerk of the House directs, amendments being indicated, and shall not be further proceeded with until it has been reprinted and marked REPRINTED on the Orders and Notices paper."

I wonder, Mr Speaker, if you could be helpful here for us. As we're proceeding, I gather, to vote later today on this bill, it may be helpful if we all actually had a copy of the bill that we're voting on.

The Speaker: We have a special order of the House, the procedures that are being followed today. We're in those procedures and they're in order.

Further debate? The leader of the third party.

Mr Bob Rae (York South): I will not only be giving a speech on third reading of the bill; I will also be marking the third reading of my political career this morning. Therefore, Mr Speaker, I'm going to have to ask you and the House for some slight indulgence. I will of course focus my attention on the contents of Bill 26 in so far as that is possible, given that we don't now have a copy of the legislation, but perhaps members will understand that I would like to take this opportunity in giving some reflections on the last 20 years in public life, as well as on questions about the future.

I have four things that I would like to say, and if I can keep to four, I'll have done well.

The first is that I feel very strongly that politics is a very necessary part of life. Public life is neither a recipe for self-enrichment nor is it a crown of thorns. I often hear people talking about how difficult and how trying and how onerous it must be to be in politics or in public life. Similarly, I often hear from my constituents as to how they know that everyone in public life is a millionaire and how one is simply there in order to enrich oneself in one way or another. I just want to make the point at this time in my life of saying that I think both those views are completely wrong.

Politics for me has been a wonderful, wonderful experience. I have absolutely no regrets about my having chosen, as a relatively young man, to enter public life. I'm sure there are times and moments when I could have made far more money in doing other things, but I can honestly say that that was not a factor. I can also say very directly to members that I'm sure each and every one of us knows some of that sense of joy and the sense of fun, the sense of partnership, the sense of camaraderie, the sense of working in common with others for a good cause. In my view, there is no finer thing in life—in public life in any event, in these forms of very necessary partnership.

1040

I've been lucky enough to be elected eight times. The very first time I ran, I was considered to be an impossible candidate. I was too young. I was allegedly too rich. I had never worked a day in my life, and there are some who would no doubt say that is still true. I've been lucky enough to be a rising star in four separate decades, and I'm looking forward to the next one, I would say.

But to my constituents in Broadview in the east end of Toronto and in the west end in York South, I would simply like to say thank you. You've given me a chance to serve, a chance to learn something of your lives, a chance to represent you in so many different ways, and to have received the confidence of the electorate on eight separate occasions is something of which I'm enormously proud. I have done so standing on behalf of the New Democratic Party and due to the assistance and help and work and dedication of literally thousands and thousands of volunteers.

If any one of my children were to say to me at any time in their lives that they would like to enter politics,

I would encourage them to do so, as I would to any young person who wants to make a contribution and is prepared to perhaps develop an extra layer of skin, an additional sense of perspective and irony. But once those things have been settled, it is truly a marvellous, marvelous opportunity to learn and to serve.

To have been able to become a Premier of this province, which I was lucky enough to do on October 1, 1990, was obviously, for me, the culmination of a lot of hard work and effort. The fact that I was not re-elected as Premier was of course a disappointment but, as I've subsequently discovered, not the end of the world.

I'd like, if I might, to pay tribute—perhaps this is a little unusual—to some of the extraordinary opponents I've had, because in public life no doubt people focus on the partisanship and on the harshness of the things that are said. I've certainly given as good as I've received—at least I hope I have—and I hope no one has taken offence at things that I have said in moments of extreme partisanship.

But I think of William Davis, who was the Premier when I was first elected to this House, someone whose patience and whose sense of humour I always have enjoyed and continue to enjoy to this day.

I think of the Honourable Robert Nixon, who served with me in opposition, from whom I learned an enormous amount not just about politics but about the life and history of this province, and whose intense sense of partisanship never prevented him from becoming a friend.

I think of the masterly control of the House which I used to see by one Allan J. MacEachen, who was the archetype for me of a truly dedicated public servant, a marvellous speaker and an extraordinary political tactician. All of us could learn something from watching him, and I hope I did.

I have had the opportunity to serve with some marvelous people, both federally and provincially. In my own case, when I was elected to Parliament in 1978, Ed Broadbent was my leader. I also had the chance to serve with Stanley Knowles and with Tommy Douglas, two individuals whose integrity stood out like a beacon for me, whose incredible sense of the history of this country and sense of sacrifice is quite extraordinary, and I'm truly grateful for having had the opportunity to serve with them.

Mr Broadbent was the first and only leader I had the chance to serve with before becoming leader of the provincial party myself, and I can honestly say that in many respects I have tried to match his sense of patience, his sense of humour, his sense of balance and his sense of the need for our own party to come to terms with the dramatic changes under way in our economy and in our lives.

Of course it's an enormous risk to pay tribute to one's colleagues, because in doing so there are always people one leaves out, so as I had chance to do yesterday evening at a private dinner with my caucus colleagues, I would like to single out simply my seatmate, the member for Nickel Belt.

We became friends in political opposition, but I think it's fair to say that our partnership was never stronger than in the five years we served together in government.

My colleague served as Deputy Premier and as Minister of Finance and, as I'm sure the Deputy Premier and Minister of Finance today will know, there's probably no more onerous responsibility in the government. It's one that Floyd has carried out with humour, with patience, with perseverance and with incredible loyalty. To him I am grateful for having made politics as enjoyable and as rewarding as it is.

To my staff: I've been very lucky to have had some who served with me throughout my entire time in politics. David Agnew and Sheila Kirouac both came into my office at a very young age. They married and are raising two children. I just want to pay tribute to both of them for their dedication to my public life. I would also like to say that my constituency assistant, Tony Romano, has been with me in York South from the very beginning, and, as all of us know, it's the constituency staff who not only get us there but keep us there. For many people in my constituency of York South, Tony Romano is Bob Rae and the New Democratic Party, and to him I am enormously grateful, as to all those who've helped.

Shakespeare wrote at the end of *All's Well That Ends Well*:

The web of our life is of a mingled yarn,
good and ill together.
Our virtues would be proud if our faults
whip them not,
And our crimes would despair if they were not
cherished by our own virtues.

I think I can say that this Legislature has served its purpose in making sure that my virtue was never allowed to be very proud either in opposition or in government, and that's as it should be. But perhaps my critics will not be surprised if I point out the second half of Shakespeare's comment, that "our crimes would despair if they were not cherished by our own virtues."

I am proud of what I have tried to do in public life and I feel that the efforts of our government to keep the province whole in a time of enormous financial and economic challenge, our determination not to forget the least fortunate, and our determination to try to find the correct balance between the need for efficiency, the need for greater productivity, the need for a successful economy, the need to respect freedom and the need at the same time for social justice—it's never an easy task, it's never an easy balance to find, and no doubt there will be those who will say we failed to find it at different moments, but we never stopped trying to find it. That indeed has been my central political belief.

I'll repeat it again: The politics of this province and the politics of Canada is about balance. Social justice, economic efficiency, liberty have always to be balanced. Balanced economies and balanced societies are just as important as balanced budgets, and they do not necessarily have to be at odds or at war with each other. They need to be made to work together.

There's a role for markets; there's a role for companies, for banks and for business; there's also a role for unions, for universities, for non-profit agencies, as well as for government itself. Government is not an evil. Government is the means we have chosen together to

accomplish critical ends and objectives. Above all, there's a role for people, not just the wealthy and the well-spoken, who, from my experience both in opposition and in government, have a great deal of ease in making their views known and in making their influence felt.

1050

I'm always reminded of a comment of Harry Truman, who made a point of saying at the end of a large lobbying session that it was his job to represent the people who didn't have a lobbyist. Fundamentally, that is the objective of government, and it becomes harder in our time because the lobbyists and the special interests, which exist in all sectors, always are able to find the voices and the lawyers and the people who can put forward the views and make the case and make the representation. They can get to the newspaper editors and they can get to the publishers and they can get to the editorial boards. But the broad interest of the common people has got to be represented and has got to be spoken for by the Legislature of this province. It's got to be represented above all by the government and by the Premier of the day, even if it means making decisions that are exceptionally unpopular.

I think it's fair to say that history as well as current analysis would reflect that our government made many unpopular decisions. Only time will tell whether they were the right decisions. Sometimes they were, no doubt; sometimes, I'm sure, they weren't. But they were always made in the spirit of being determined to try to do the right thing, and I did that and our government did it at significant political cost. But I also can say to all of you that I have a clear conscience about those decisions because they were made not to impress a poll or an editorial board or a particular publishing company or a particular media outlet, or even because it was in conformity with something I had said or allegedly said three years or five years or 10 years before, because I believe politics is also about the courage to change, the courage to change one's mind, the courage to recognize when something one has believed in might not be still correct today and that circumstance requires this courage to change.

What troubles me most about politics today—I know it is going to be hard for me to strike exactly the right note, because I do not want to be meanspiritedly partisan, but at the same time I want to say what I think and what I feel about where we are in the Legislature today.

We told the people of the province, and not just during the election campaign but for the entire period in which the Common Sense Revolution was made public and then presented to the people, that it was an absurd document, that as wonderful as the objectives in it might be, anybody who's had 30 seconds' experience in governing this province would know that what it was proposing to do could not be done in the way in which it was proposed, that a promise not to cut health care, a promise to guarantee law enforcement and justice spending, a promise to guarantee educational spending in the classroom, was entirely and utterly incompatible with the financial and fiscal objectives set out in the document.

It is a document which—I do not know whether it was intended to deceive, but I do know that it is a document

that is fundamentally based on a deception. And Bill 26 is the attempt to square the circle. That's all it is. It is an attempt to square the circle, and members opposite should not be surprised at the outrage.

My Conservative opponent in the good riding of York South—I'll be interested to see if he runs again—Dr Edwards, a neighbour of mine, had bought the OMA line about our government, and had bought the line of his leader about the fact that health care spending was going to be guaranteed. I can't speak for Dr Edwards, but he has spoken for himself, and I'm sure there's a sense of personal betrayal on his part, because the powers this government has accrued to itself are far more ominous, as far as the medical profession is concerned, than any powers that have been taken by any government in the history of the province of Ontario. No government has taken upon itself such a degree of centralized power, and that is not what Dr Edwards thought the Conservative platform meant. He did not believe he was voting for new bureaucracies. He did not believe he was being enrolled as an architect of a new despotism, yet that is what we have.

I hope the government finds the courage to change. I hope the government has the courage to finally admit that the promises contained in the Common Sense Revolution are literally unachievable. They're unachievable because the numbers don't add up and because if you try to achieve the kind of fiscal financial wizardry proposed in this document, you will do so only at enormous expense—expense to jobs, expense to families, expense to growth, expense to justice, all in the name of ideology, all in the name of a document which is now being taken as some sort of holy gospel.

This document has to be exposed for what it is. I look at the contortions the government has had to go through. I look at the bending and twisting of, "Is that a promise or is that a user fee or is that a charge?" How can we explain the absolute and total absence of any minister from defending this legislation for the space of three weeks? Say what you like about our government, but we took the heat and we were there. This government is led from behind. It stands in the name of the Minister of Finance. Where was he? Where has he been? Where is his leadership on this bill?

The Premier says, "I'm unacquainted with the details." I say to my friends in the media, if I had said that, you wouldn't have put up with it for more than five seconds. You would've crucified me and crucified the government. There wasn't one thing our government did that we weren't supposed to be responsible for. Then this Premier stands up in his most genial fashion and says: "Oh, gosh, I'm not a master of detail. Sorry, folks, I've been away. I've been telling everybody that Ontario is open for business, because Ontario's been closed for business for the last five years or 10 years or 15 years."

Interjections.

Mr Rae: Right. Wait for it. You tell that to Honda. You tell that to Toyota. You tell that to the European interests. You tell that to the largest increase in investment in 1994 that we ever had in the history of the province. What poppycock. What poppycock and what arrogance.

And the Premier explaining why he has to suffer in going to Davos next week because he has to overcome the problem—well, this kind of suffering I'm sure the Premier will get used to over time.

That kind of arrogance ill becomes him, as well as the statement he made in the wilds of India saying: "What's the legacy of Mr Rae, as he announces his retirement? One word: Deficit." What a shot.

I put it all in balance and I put it in perspective, but there's far more at stake here in this legislation. It's precisely because this government is obsessed—obsessed—with what needs to be done with the numbers and with the tax break it has proposed that it is forcing the public sector and forcing the people of this province into a box that is not of their own making.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): Your making.

Mr Rae: No. The member opposite said of my making. I say to you, sir, have you ever heard of the recession? Have you not the decency to at least admit that there was, for three and a half to four years in this province, an exceptional recession caused by high interest rates, by a free trade agreement that came on long and fast and hard? Do you not have the decency to admit that? Will you not now at least admit that? Will you not now at least admit that during the time that William Davis governed in 1975, there was an increase in the deficit? Will you not have the decency to admit that in the recession in 1980 and 1981, Mr Davis also allowed the deficit to rise, because he had a sense of proportion and balance which the right-wing zealots who have taken over the Tory party have utterly and completely lost? That's the problem.

1100

There is the stench of right-wing zealotry about this government. There is the stench of the Reform Party which hangs over this government and which has affected it. That is what is wrong with this legislation.

Mr Chris Stockwell (Etobicoke West): Bob, this wasn't going to be partisan.

Mr Rae: I would not want to make my exit any more quiet than my coming into public life.

Some 60 years ago, it was a British conservative, a distinguished jurist named Lord Hewart, who, observing the dramatic change in administrative law which was under way in Britain at that time, described the accrual of power to bureaucrats and to ministers without limits, without review, without any kind of constructive law. He called it a new despotism. He said it threatened, in his view, the capacity of people to be truly free. It affected the ability of our courts and of the rule of law to establish and re-establish a sense of balance. I never thought that I would be drawing on the work of true conservatives in order to call this government to order.

The Minister of Health has the power to shut down institutions, and now he says, "We're going to sunset it." You can do a lot of shutting in four years. I think that sunset is a complete phony. What you need is a process in which the interests of the parties can be reconciled. What you need is a process in which one says, "We're going to make this a genuinely non-political, non-partisan exercise." I would say—

Mr Tilson: You closed beds.

Mr Rae: Yes, we closed beds. I recognize the need for reform and I'm glad the member for Wellington is active. He should be in the cabinet if he wants to be so active. I don't see why he shouldn't be put in there. Give him a chance to speak up, instead of forcing him on the front lines to constantly be defending legislation which he hasn't had the chance to read and amendments which he hasn't had the chance to see.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): This is Wellington over here.

Mr Rae: The member for Wellington should be there as well. He couldn't do any worse than the others who are there.

This is a critical point and this is what is driving all sorts of people who are not New Democrats and who are not Liberals and who would like still to be members of the Tory party and who would like to be supporters of the Tory party, driving them to say, "This bill has gone too far." It is the power that is being accrued to a few and it is the inability of citizens to have their voices heard and the determination of people to force this through.

Over time, I say to members opposite, you too will come alive and, as you come to caucus meetings, you too will start to ask questions about what kind of legislation needs 160 amendments in the space of three days, presented and rammed through. What sort of process is this? Mr Speaker, you will find and members opposite will find the need to make reform happen in a way that draws on public sentiment and that draws on what the public is saying. This bill goes too far and it goes too fast and it gives too much power. Fundamentally, it is based on the absurdities of the promises made in the Common Sense Revolution. Tragically, it is at the same time the complete denial of the document called the Common Sense Revolution.

Let me just for the record repeat it again, because I know how much members like to hear this document read out:

"Let's start with the top priorities—the essential services that Ontarians want to see protected.

"Health care:

"We will not cut health care spending. It's far too important."

There are layoffs throughout the health care sector and there are, in every community in this province, people who know full and perfectly well that it is part of the agenda of this government to cut health care spending. That's what they're doing, that's what they are carrying out.

I have many who are afraid to speak out and, now that I have left politics, I hear more from hospital presidents and chairmen of boards of hospitals than ever before, because they're intimidated and they're afraid. They say: "Should we speak out? What do you think we should do? Will we be punished if we speak out?" I look forward over the next few weeks, as I begin to discuss with people in various institutions, and my answer to people will be, you must speak out. You must work. You must. Don't be afraid. There is nothing wrong with saying the debate must continue. Bill 26 is not the end of the day. These issues must continue and this opinion must be

changed, and the only way to change it is for ordinary people, and extraordinary people, to have the courage to speak out against this government. That's what must happen. That's what must continue to be done.

It then goes on to say:

"The people of Ontario are rightly concerned about community safety in our province, particularly the increasing incidence of violent crime. That is why funding for law enforcement and justice will be guaranteed."

There has never been as great a crisis in our justice system since the time of the Askov decision. I'm not here going to say what happened and what didn't happen. We all know what happened. We know the trauma and we know the outrage and we know the sense of betrayal that was felt by thousands of citizens, innocent victims, when cases of alleged criminals were thrown out because of the decision in Askov.

I can well recall the Attorney General of the day and I having to sit down in the very first weeks of the government. Even before we were sworn in, we became aware of the magnitude of the decision. We right away had to deal with this issue. It involved additional resources and it involved moving things as quickly as we possibly could. I'm very proud of those achievements, of the investments that were made by the member for Rainy River and by the member for London Centre. It would now appear that all of this is threatened by virtue of this mania for cuts—mania for cuts at the expense of jobs, mania for cuts at the expense of health, mania for cuts at the expense of the basic protection of the person and protection of property.

That's not why the Tory party was elected. If the Premier, leader of the Conservative Party, had said, "Elect me and I'm going to cut health care. Elect me and I'm going to cut police funding and I'm going to cut the funding for courts and I'm going to close a whole bunch of jails and I'm going to do X, Y and close a bunch of halfway houses and I'm going to close all these things. Vote for me," he would have been laughed out of the province—and he knows it. That's why I say this document is a deception, it's a complete deception. It is a deception that continues to this day as the government says, "Well, you know, when we said 'user fee,' we didn't mean user, we didn't mean a charge," or "We didn't mean da, da, da, da, da, da."

Interjection: Copayment.

Mr Rae: Copayment. But the leader of the Conservative Party in opposition, standing where I stand today—and it's all on tape now, and we can all recall it very clearly—said: "Oh, don't mix words. Do the numbers. Don't mix words." "Premier, is it a user fee or a charge? We all know it's the same thing." Well, we do know it's the same thing.

So when it comes to drugs, when it comes to education in the classroom, when it comes to every basic issue that the Conservatives knew they were vulnerable on in the last election, because they knew that people did not want those things to be cut, they said: "Don't worry. We won't cut them." And now you're cutting them and that's why people are mad, that's why people are upset.

1110

Interjection: That's why we're at 50% in the polls.

Mr Rae: You've lost the need for balance. I hear someone saying over on the other side, "That's why we're at 50% in the polls."

Mrs McLeod: Not a chance.

Mr Rae: Trust me, my friend, those numbers will change. I know whereof I speak, and so does the Leader of the Opposition. These numbers change. They don't mean a damn thing, and if you govern by those polls, my friends, you are making a very, very sad and tragic error. Do not fall into that trap of complacency about some dumb poll that's taken one day or another. Politics is not about following polls; politics is about changing opinion and about providing leadership. That's what politics is all about. It's not about following some stupid poll.

I said I had four points; I've covered two and I've got two to go.

My third point is that we must all of us in this House and in this province work much harder for a Canada that understands the need for unity and diversity at the same time. We are at a critical moment in our history as a country. Having said that, I've made the same point and the same statement on many other occasions in this House—on this side, on that side and now back on this side again. Yet I must confess, I believe it more strongly today than I have believed it at any other time.

Canada was born because of the decision of politicians in the combined province of Canada, in what is now Ontario and Quebec, that it was necessary for the survival of British North America north of the 49th parallel that there be developed a partnership. It's interesting to remember that in a sense Canada had to come apart before it could come together. You will all recall that Lord Durham made the decision to bring people together. We needed to come, in a sense, to be at one with ourselves in forming provinces in order to allow that to happen.

Quebec is a distinct society. We must recognize that. We lose nothing by granting what is unique and distinct in others. I've been very proud to have been part of a tradition that transcends party in this regard, that we've found a common ground on these questions for decades, that we have not played footsie in any way with those who would deny the uniqueness of Quebec and the importance of recognizing their cultural, linguistic and other concerns. So I say once again to my fellow legislators, we must reject the solutions that divide or that insist that we all be the same or that deny diversity. The genius of federalism and the genius of Canada is that we have been able to combine unity and diversity. I shall continue to work throughout my political life and my public life in the future, whatever form it may take, and my private life, whatever form that may take, for this continued sense of balance and for the continuing importance of the unity of our country.

Mr Speaker, I have to do something rather unusual. I have about five more minutes and I wonder if I might have the indulgence of the House to proceed to that point.

Je dois dire que nous sommes un pays qui n'est pas un pays centraliste mais un pays fédéral, ce qui veut dire que les provinces ont des pouvoirs importants, et en même temps nous avons décidé d'être ensemble pour des raisons importantes et permanentes.

Mais cette association commune que nous avons, qui s'appelle le Canada, n'est pas un État centralisateur. Nous avons les garanties des droits minoritaires au Québec et en Ontario parallèlement. Nous avons montré, je crois depuis bien longtemps dans cette province, notre volonté de continuer de parler, de participer dans ce dialogue constitutionnel tellement important en même temps que nous nous sommes engagés à protéger les minorités dans notre propre province.

Je dis encore à nos concitoyens québécois que nous voulons garder le Canada uni, mais en même temps divers, qui reconnaît la spécificité du Québec et le fait que le Québec est une société distincte. C'est ça qui est important, certainement pour les jours à venir.

Nous sommes tous reconnaissants du fait que M. Bouchard deviendra cet après-midi le premier ministre du Québec et qu'il a encore répété l'engagement de son gouvernement à tirer le Québec hors de la fédération. C'est pourquoi je crois que c'est important que la population québécoise sache que pour nous, Ontariens, notre volonté de faire les changements nécessaires pour tout le Canada est permanente, que c'est quelque chose qui est partagé par tous les partis dans la Chambre et je crois par tous les premiers ministres dans cette province depuis bien longtemps. Je suis fier du fait que pendant ma période en tant que premier ministre, nous avons pu montrer de façons très concrètes et très spécifiques notre volonté et notre sens du devoir.

Finally, I would like to pay a somewhat unusual tribute in this House, but it is to my wife, Arlene, and to my family.

Shakespeare's 25th sonnet goes like this:

Let those who are in favour with their stars
Of public honour and proud titles boast,
Whilst I, whom fortune of such triumph bars,
Unlook'd for joy in that I honour most.
Great princes' favourites their fair leaves spread
But as the marigold at the sun's eye,
And in themselves their pride lies buried,
For at a frown they in their glory die.
The painful warrior famoused for fight,
After a thousand victories once foil'd,
Is from the book of honour razed quite,
And all the rest forgot for which he toil'd
Then happy I, that love and am belov'd,
Where I may not remove nor be remov'd.

My family have done much to teach me something of the limits of politics and the rewards of other parts of life. I'm very proud of having been able to serve the people of Ontario for nearly 20 years. I could not have done it without the example of my parents and the cherished support of my family and friends. Arlene, Judith, Lisa and Eleanor have given me the joy and security of a love that cannot be removed, and for that I am eternally grateful. And so I say, hail and farewell.

1120

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I understand that there is going to be a special tribute to the leader of the third party later today. However, I would at this time like to—

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): Resign.

Hon Mr Leach: At least he has a little class. I'd like to wish him my very personal best. I do have a great deal of respect for his integrity and his dedication to the people of the province of Ontario and to Canada. In the past we've worked together on major transit issues, and he always, always provided very strong support. Obviously, there are issues that we do not agree on, and Bill 26 is one of those.

When Bill 26 was introduced on November 29, our only agenda for this legislation was the need for quick action to give municipalities the tools they require to manage with fewer provincial subsidies. The fiscal and economic statement of November 29 set out the reduced funding transfers for this year and beyond. We prepared the municipal sector for these reductions in the months that preceded the announcement. I know that municipalities heeded our advice and started to prepare, but they were missing some important new tools to help them adjust. These tools are what the municipal side of the bill is all about. I'm sure that everyone is familiar with them now.

Just let me say that most of the bill's provisions fall into two categories: those that give municipalities more autonomy to make local decisions, and those that help municipalities cut costs or raise additional revenues.

Bill 26 was introduced to combat the province's financial crisis. And let's not make any mistake: We are in the midst of a very serious crisis, one that gives us no alternatives other than the tough measures this government has had the courage to take. They're not pleasant, they're tough medicine, but Ontario cannot continue down the debt spiral. We must take action to restore prosperity to this great province, and we must take it now.

Many of the municipal provisions of Bill 26 were long overdue. Municipalities have been asking the province to introduce them for many years. Bill 26 recognizes that municipalities have grown up. They've been asking us to stop treating them like children. I think Bill 26 is a clear recognition that municipalities are capable of managing much more, that they can make their own decisions on matters of local interest, and that they will act responsibly.

Our municipal partners have been pleased with the tools provided in Bill 26 because they give them coping mechanisms. With these tools, municipalities won't necessarily have to resort to raising property taxes to make up for the reduced provincial subsidies.

When I introduced the bill to the standing committee on general government, I assured the committee members that clarifications would be made to the bill if they were necessary. Our goal was to make sure we had things right so that the legislation would work. During the hearings which took place in Toronto and locations all across the province, we heard some genuine concerns expressed. We responded to them. It is proof that we were open to suggestions and listened to representations during the committee hearings held on the bill.

Some amendments clarify what has always been the intent of the legislation; still others strengthen it in areas where it needed to be stronger. We publicly announced several significant amendments on January 18 and introduced others for the clause-by-clause consideration

by MPPs that followed. There are a number of detailed amendments affecting local government. It's not my intention to go into each one of them here, but I would like to focus on a few key amendments to make sure the intent of the legislation is crystal-clear.

One of the major concerns we heard was that Bill 26 might allow municipalities to levy income, sales or gasoline taxes. That was never the case, and we wanted to clarify any misinterpretations. The bill will indeed provide municipalities with more flexibility on how they raise revenues, but our amendment makes it clear that this does not include income, sales or gasoline taxes. The amendment explicitly prohibits municipalities from imposing taxes in this area.

In a similar vein, there has been much debate about Bill 26 making it possible for municipalities to charge a poll tax as a way to raise revenues. My personal belief is that such a tax for any municipality would be suicidal, and I don't think any municipality would impose that kind of charge. But there has been enough concern expressed that we decided to amend the legislation to prohibit such a tax. We are not going to allow municipalities to charge a poll tax or any similar fee or charge simply because someone lives in a municipality. This was never the intent; this was never in the legislation.

Concerns also surfaced around the provision in Bill 26 about licence fees. The bill will allow municipalities to charge licence fees, and it will also remove outdated, unreasonable fees set in the Municipal Act, such as \$1 a year for a bakery licence. The problem with maintaining licence fees at such a ridiculously low level is that they are money losers for municipalities. They cannot possibly recover administration and enforcement costs with that kind of fee.

When we drafted the legislation, we were convinced that municipalities would use this power responsibly. But some have raised concerns that municipalities might use the provisions in the bill to charge excessive licence fees as a way to raise revenues. They have also suggested that municipalities could use licensing powers to make it too expensive for a business to set up shop, thereby excluding it from the community.

In view of these concerns, we amended Bill 26. We did this to prevent municipalities from setting unreasonable licence fees as tools simply to raise revenues or exclude certain types of businesses from the community. That was never the intent. So the amendment will specify that municipalities must take into account the cost to administer and enforce business-licensing bylaws in setting fees.

One final provision of Bill 26 relates to municipal restructuring. The bill removes barriers to municipal restructuring and gives greater authority to municipalities to make restructuring decisions. The government's intention in Bill 26 is to provide more flexibility to municipalities that are interested in restructuring. The reason, of course, is to help municipalities achieve greater efficiency and cost saving.

Restructuring attempts have been long and tedious in the past, and few have been successful. The current legislation is cumbersome, inefficient and expensive. Unless there was 100% consent by the affected muni-

palities, provincial legislation was always needed to implement restructuring. Because of this, the legislation originally gave authority to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing to appoint a restructuring commission to be used when consensus could not be achieved locally. This commission would have the powers to develop and implement its own restructuring plan. This caused some concerns that the minister could arbitrarily impose restructuring on a municipality where there was no local interest, that Queen's Park could impose a made-in-Toronto decision where it wasn't wanted, without any local input.

We've agreed and have introduced an amendment so that the minister cannot even consider appointing a local restructuring commission unless there has been a local request. Before the minister can appoint a restructuring commission, there must be a request made by at least one municipality or, in the case of an unorganized area, at least 75 residents. Without a locally initiated request, a commission cannot be appointed.

To further limit this authority, restructuring commissions can't be appointed after December 31, 1999. By then, we should have a good idea whether or not commissions have helped accomplish restructuring and whether or not they are still an economic necessity.

The amendments also require a restructuring commission to consult with the municipalities involved. It must issue a draft report, hold at least one public meeting and receive written submissions before the final decision is made. The municipalities and the public must also be given notice about how they can have input into the process. It's clear that these amendments make the process completely democratic while serving our interest of increasing local autonomy.

One other amendment I would like to mention deals with the liability of municipal councillors in municipalities where a restructuring proposal has been submitted but not yet enacted. The original legislation would have made councillors personally liable for violating any parts of this regulation. After consideration, we have decided to repeal this liability clause because it was unnecessary. There will be appropriate protection for the future restructured municipality in the regulations that municipalities and their councillors will have to follow.

1130

You have heard me mention several times increased local autonomy, more local decision-making and confidence in our municipalities. We were sure enough that municipalities would make appropriate choices that we gave them the flexibility to decide how to spend the money we give them.

Bill 26 creates the Ontario municipal support program. This program rolls three previous provincial grants into one block grant fund, with virtually all funding conditions removed. Municipalities will now have the freedom to spend this money on local priorities.

I don't want to gloss over the fact that municipalities are going to be receiving less money from the province. Some municipalities had substantial reductions this year; others had less. Those that got off lightly are aware that we will be reviewing our distribution formula for next year. All municipalities must take a long-term view and

contemplate change. The breathing space we have given some municipalities this year is an opportunity for them to do better planning for future restructuring.

These are challenging times, and I am confident that Bill 26, the Savings and Restructuring Act, will be instrumental in revolutionizing Ontario's municipal sector. It is recognized that our municipalities have come of age and are ready to be treated like adults. Passage of this bill is very important so that we and our municipal and other transfer partners can move ahead in the months to come, so that they can take the strides they must take to become truly self-reliant and help get this province moving again.

Mr Phillips: I'm pleased to join the debate on Bill 26, to say that I think this bill has completely changed the mood of this province. I think most people across the province were prepared prior to this to give you a chance, to say: "Listen, they were elected. They've got an agenda. Let them get on with it." But I would say to you that on November 29, when you introduced this bill, the mood in this province changed. Two things happened. One is that we in the opposition, and I think the public, don't trust you any more, and this bill is a symbol of that. The second thing is that many people thought you had some competency; they may not have agreed with your agenda, but they thought you were at least competent. This bill and the process we've been through have proven that you're incompetent.

If you want to know why we're so angry, it is because we in the opposition feel betrayed by this bill. I will just go over the reasons we don't trust you any more.

First, the public may remember that this bill, 211 pages, was introduced when we in the opposition were in what's called a lockup. The government knew we would be there. We were in that lockup until 4 o'clock on November 29 to review the fiscal statement, and at 3:30 in this House the government introduced this bill. It was deliberate and was the first indication for us that you're not to be trusted.

Then what did you try to do? You tried to ram this bill through in two weeks with no debate. I hope the Conservative backbench members now realize that was a fundamental abuse of power. Why did you try to do that? Because somebody in the Premier's office thought they could get away with it.

The alarms went off for me when that night, November 29, I was with one of the senior ex-members of this Conservative Party who said to me: "Gee, I hope you're going to let that bill go through. I hope you're not going to be obstructionist about it. I hope we're going to get it passed before Christmas." I realized what you were trying to do: ram a bill through this House in two weeks, with no debate, which you had no business doing. It's an insult to the people of this province. This bill touches every single person in this province and you wanted to ram it through with no debate—nothing, zero debate.

Now we've found out some of the details of the bill as we've been moving along. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing just spoke, and I would say his fingerprints are all over this bill in a very nasty way. The first thing that happened was that the Minister of Municipal Affairs went to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and said: "Listen, I'm cutting your grants in half.

What will it take to keep you quiet?" Do you know who was sacrificed there? The firefighters, the police, hospital workers, conservation authorities, library boards, and the public.

You have given them carte blanche to introduce user fees in the widest possible way. As a matter of fact, as you know, your language was, "We're going to give unlimited flexibility for user fees." There is no doubt that this bill permitted gas taxes; there's no doubt of that. The Canadian Bar Association went through the bill. The only one who thought it didn't is the minister, who's shaking his head. Then we had the extraordinary circumstance of the minister saying he's going to call for his own resignation if he's wrong. It was an incredible show. He said, "I'm going to call for my resignation if I'm wrong." And we find he was wrong, dead wrong, 100% wrong. This bill, until it was amended, indeed did permit gas taxes. And that's not us talking; that's everybody who's looked at it. As a matter of fact, he says he tabled a legal opinion that said it prohibited it. We don't believe that.

Even today we hear him saying things about this bill that I don't believe are true. He said that the licence fee must reflect the cost of the inspection. The bill does not say that. He is either once again not aware of what the bill says or he's misleading the House. He says that the bill never permitted gas tax or a poll tax. Well, he himself said it permitted a poll tax, and now he's saying the bill didn't permit a poll tax.

Hon Mr Leach: I never said that.

Mr Phillips: You didn't say it permitted a poll tax? You didn't say it permitted a poll tax? Of course it permitted a poll tax.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): You didn't say it today. You said it to the media.

Mr Phillips: Exactly. Then I heard him on Saturday night saying, "There are only 12 amendments in my section." Add them up, Minister. There are 34 amendments. My point is simply this: Why do we not trust you? It's because you do not say things that are accurate. On Saturday night he said, "Twelve amendments in my section." Count them. There are 34 amendments. Can the opposition have any trust at all in a government that as recently as a few minutes ago was once again saying things in the Legislature that are not in the bill?

I would say to every firefighter, every police officer, every school teacher, every hospital worker, that the bill fundamentally changes collective bargaining for you. Why? Because Al Leach bargained away your collective bargaining rights to AMO. You were never at the table. You didn't have a chance for a debate. It was simply put in this bill with no opportunity for debate.

The public sector pension fund is another example where people can't trust you. It was you people who tried through regulation, not through negotiation or any openness, to take \$250 million out of the public sector pension. You tried that. The union took you to court and you were proven to be acting illegally. So what did you do? You took this bill and exempted yourself from the Pension Benefits Act. How can anybody trust you when you try and do something through regulations and go to court and the courts say you're acting illegally, so what do you do? You change the law. Surely you recognize that means that people in this province are unable to trust you.

1140

As we look at the rest of this bill, in the areas of health—and it's been touched on—it was clear, 100% clear, during the campaign that you were saying, "No new user fees and no new copayments." You spelled it out in detail.

So what do you do with the first major bill? You completely repudiate that promise. The minister today said, "Well, nine other provinces have that." Well, nine other provinces had that when you made the promise, but you said you looked at those nine other provinces and rejected that. You said you were going to bring a fair share health levy to pay the copayments, not to put it on people. You looked at those nine other provinces, you rejected that during the election, and now we find, six months after the election, that the government is essentially repudiating its own campaign document.

You went through the same thing on health care. "We won't touch a penny of health care." This bill is all about cutting health care spending. If you felt that's what you needed to do, you should not have misled the people during the campaign.

I go on about the mistrust. I can remember the government saying: "We're going to put this through in two weeks, no debate, because we've studied the bill. We've got to get on with it. This bill is just fine." Then we find 160 amendments. The bill has been gutted by your own amendments. You were made to look like fools because of 160 amendments to this bill.

Still on trust: We had the spectacle where one day we're in committee hearings at 9 o'clock in the morning—I remember it well, we were in Thunder Bay—and we said, "Will you table your amendments?" The government said to us, "We have no intention of tabling amendments until we complete the public hearings." At exactly that moment, at 9 o'clock that very day in Kitchener, the government was tabling I think 50 amendments to the health sector of the bill.

The point I'm making is that we can't trust you. At 9 o'clock in one committee, we're being told that the government has no intention of tabling amendments, and at 9 o'clock and 1,200 kilometres away in another committee, they're tabling 50 amendments. So what's the public to believe?

Mr Murdoch: What's the point?

Mr Phillips: What's the point? I appreciate one of the members over there asking. The point is trust. The point is doing what you said you would do. The point is not lying. The point is being straight with people. That's what the point is. If you think you could've rammed this bill through in 14 days, with the bill essentially filled with mistakes, you now have found out you can't do that.

The second thing I want to talk about is competence. Again, there was a feeling that at least you may have known what you were doing. The bill proves you're incompetent. I don't know who was responsible for this mess, but to have a bill that purports to implement your agenda, that purports to do what you've said you thought about for all these four years in opposition, and then to find we've got 160 amendments, shows your incompetence.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs himself was unable to explain some of the most fundamental parts of the bill, and even today in his explanation he's wrong. The licence provisions are not as he outlined them. The tax provisions are not as he outlined them. He's wrong on the restructuring. Even today, hours before we vote on this bill, the minister once again either he doesn't seem to understand the amendments he's brought forward or he's trying to—perhaps "mislead" is too strong a word—perhaps sneak it through.

Also in terms of competence, I thought we had an undertaking that the ministers would come to our committee and explain their amendments. For the public, this may all sound like just procedure, but for the Legislature it is extremely important that the ministers come to the committee and outline the amendments they're making. Frankly, they didn't have the guts to show up. That's strong language, but the Minister of Municipal Affairs, who says he's made important amendments, did not have the courage to come to the committee and review the amendments that he was proposing. He was hiding. The Minister of Health refused to come; substantial amendments—hiding. I thought we had an undertaking from the government that those two ministers would appear and they would review their amendments and review where they were going with the amendments.

Competence: I remember at the hearings last week, at 3:45—and all the amendments had to be filed at 4 o'clock—we in the opposition were raising a fundamental point with the government. That was protection of medical records in a section of the bill that permits closure of hospitals. What could be more fundamental than that, that when you close a hospital, there's protection of personal medical records? We were told by the government: "No, no, the privacy commissioner is very happy with the proposals in here. Don't worry."

Remember, there are 15 minutes to go before amendments can be filed. My colleague Ms Caplan said, "I'll make a phone call," went and phoned the privacy commissioner at a quarter to 4 to inquire about this extremely important aspect of the bill and found that the commissioner was very worried about it, felt the bill had to be amended to fix that problem. It was quite literally at 4 o'clock when an amendment, a part of which had been proposed by my colleague Ms Caplan, was finally filed to provide some protection for people's personal medical records when a hospital closes.

It was a bizarre process that we all went through. It was bizarre in the sense that even the people who came to support the bill had major reservations about the bill. I have never been through a process that was, frankly, more discouraging, because you were trying to ram through a bill that was obviously very faulty, but also almost comical in the incompetence of the government to develop a proper process for this bill.

I wanted, in the time permitted me here, to make those two points. One is that this place has changed. The backbenchers who were not here before may not realize it's changed, but as a result of what the cabinet tried to do on Bill 26, the mood has changed. We frankly won't trust the government any longer. We will be watching for similar activities. I think it was a fundamental mistake by

the government to attempt to do what it attempted to do. So you've lost our trust, but more importantly, you've lost the trust of an awful lot of people out there. Even many of your supporters would say, "I don't understand why you tried to do that."

The second thing I would say to you is that you've lost another important element, and that is the belief that you were competent. Any government that could allow a bill to get introduced like this, and where the cabinet obviously had agreed you were going to try and ram it through in 14 days, a cabinet that could allow a bill this faulty to get this far is incompetent. So those two things have done serious damage to this government. Certainly, for our side there is rage about Bill 26.

We understand the need for you to get on with your agenda. You have taken the most clumsy, ill-advised and, in our opinion, dishonest route to try and do that, and it's damage that I think your government will have difficulty recovering from.

1150

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga West): The clock is showing I only have 6:49. I hope that's not the case, but if it is, I'll try to rush through.

I'm pleased to rise today to speak to Bill 26 in really two capacities, I suppose: first as a committee member, one of the members of what was called the evidence subcommittee who went around the province and participated in the process that started in December and ended just last Friday; and secondly as a new government member, somebody who is new to politics, somebody who is working very hard to try to deliver through our agenda what the people of Ontario expect us to deliver.

I want to start off this morning by saying that I listened very carefully to the leader of the third party's comments today. In spite of our perhaps partisan differences, I appreciate his comments and, I think, his advice to all of us in this House about the political profession, the profession that he appears to be leaving, at least temporarily perhaps, and a profession that I'm just starting to learn, and some say learning perhaps not as quickly as I should.

Many people have said that Bill 26 will be this government's signature legislation. I doubt that's true. But as we've heard the leader of the third party say, only time really can tell; only time will be the judge of that. But I do believe that this bill is a crucial part of our governance program, because it addresses restructuring across a number of fronts. The bill is a large piece of legislation, no question about that; it deals with a number of ministries, no question about that, because it's restructuring legislation that allows each ministry involved in that legislation to come to grips with the restructuring issues that we have been challenged by the electorate to deliver on.

We heard any number of times, and this came from deputants from all sides of the political spectrum, that restructuring government and restoring confidence in the financial strength of this province is essential to our future. I think that's the general theme that I heard from just about everybody who spoke to us. The concept of massive restructuring and cost-cutting is one of the items that the private sector is very familiar with. Over the last decade, many private institutions have dealt with restruc-

turing, and they've dealt with it because they had, frankly, very little choice. It was either re-engineer the way they're doing their business or go out of business, plain and simple.

Many of them had to sit down and say, "What is it that we do well?" Many of them had to sit down and say, "What is it that we do not do well?" That's the difficult part about restructuring: identifying what one does well and what one does not do very well. Part of restructuring is stopping what you don't do well, letting somebody else do it, letting somebody else who has the ability, the capability, the resources to do it. That's part of what's in Bill 26.

What we're attempting to do through Bill 26 is to empower the municipalities to deal with what they do well, and that's provide services to the people of this province, that's to understand what the people of this province want, region by region, municipality by municipality, locality by locality. They understand that. They're the closest to the people. Many of the deputants who came in front of us said: "I have more confidence in my local municipality. I want them to deliver the service. They know how much we can afford to tax."

Throughout the process it was quite clear that the other members of the committee fundamentally did not agree that municipalities are the better providers of local service. I understand that view. Some of them, coming from careers in the municipal sector themselves—that's their view. That's not the view of this government. We're prepared to empower the municipalities. We're prepared to say to them: "You choose what services should be provided. You choose how the taxpayers' money should be spent. You're the closest. You make that decision."

I want to speak briefly, if I can, to the process, the committee process we went through. Clearly, the committee process has helped us improve the bill. That's why we brought amendments. We brought amendments to address the issues and concerns that we heard from the areas as we went from city to city, from town to town, from one part of this province to the other. We listened and we responded, and what we have in front of us today is an improved bill as a result of that.

The opposition has told us today that amendments somehow put us in the form of being incompetent. Well, if listening to the people of this province is being incompetent, then that's the cost we must pay. That's clearly what we've done, that's clearly what they were not prepared to do, and we have delivered to this province a piece of legislation that is far more effective in its fundamental concept than—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mrs Caplan: Today is a sad day for Ontario. Bill 26 is a very bad bill. It will be a dangerous law, and despite the 160 government amendments, it has not been fixed; it remains fundamentally flawed. This bill should be split or withdrawn.

This legislation was conceived in haste and is being rammed through this Legislature by an arrogant majority government. Mr Harris, Mr Eves and Mr Wilson are obviously suffering from an overdose of testosterone. This is their bully bill. The potential for abuse of power, the lack of due process and the elimination of natural

justice are a result of Bill 26, and that means that democracy in Ontario is diminished.

As a former Minister of Health and now Liberal opposition Health critic, I tell you that Bill 26 is bad health policy, it is bad for health care and it will be bad for Ontario's health status. Most importantly, Bill 26 is bad because it will hurt people: sick people, old people, children, poor people, and it will hurt the dedicated doctors and nurses and hospital workers and others who look after us when we are sick and when we need their care. This bill hurts us all.

Bill 26 gives us new user fees, called copayments and deductibles, for the Ontario drug benefit plan. Senior citizens and/or others have told us that seniors and social assistance recipients may be forced to choose between having a prescription filled or buying their groceries.

Psychiatrists and the Canadian Mental Health Association said that disabled mental health patients may end up back in hospital because they will not take their drugs if forced to pay what they cannot afford. We were told that nursing home and long-term-care residents will be poorer when they lose up to 25% of their meagre comfort allowances. Did the government listen? No.

Many presenters agreed with the Ontario Pharmacists' Association when they said, "Copayments are a quick fix which may in the long run do more harm than good."

A literature review of recent research was presented to us by doctors in Hamilton. That research proves beyond any reasonable doubt that user fees and copayments for drugs and necessary services are bad health policy. Did the government listen? No.

User fees don't save money; they don't stop abuse; they don't solve the problems. If the United States has taught us anything, it has taught us that making people pay costs society more. That is bad for business and that is bad for our economic health.

Mr Harris's new user fees take us on a very slippery slope; yes, they do. This legislation will deregulate drug prices, and frankly, we don't know what the impact of that will be. We know, however, that deregulation and Jim Wilson's new drug policies will certainly increase overall costs—overall costs for employers and employees and pensioners alike. His new drug policy will have serious consequences for us all. We heard that from several insurance companies. Anyone with a drug plan and anyone living in a small community in Ontario should be especially worried.

Health minister Jim Wilson really can't be serious when he suggests that buying medically necessary drugs is like buying a tin of tuna or buying a car. Can you imagine a sick patient or a parent with a child bartering or going shopping for the cheapest antibiotic they need? Tory drug policies will not lead to the goal of optimal drug therapy. Don't be fooled. When this bill is proclaimed, Jim Wilson will have complete control over every aspect of health care in Ontario. Negotiations will no longer be required, or permitted, with the doctors' Ontario Medical Association or the pharmacists' Ontario Pharmacists' Association. There will not be a partnership. There will be dictatorship, and that is the truth.

Billing numbers may dictate where doctors can practise. Who wants to be treated by a doctor who has been

coerced to a community, even perhaps separated from his or her spouse? A young doctor's wife with a career of her own spoke eloquently and passionately at the committee. We need our young doctors. We don't want them to leave Ontario. Did the government listen? No, they did not. Surely, we all know that the quality of care will suffer when providers are demoralized, suffering from poor morale or feeling insecure. The Health minister's powers will be absolute.

I see that it is 12 of the clock. If it is appropriate, I will adjourn the debate at this time and commence my remarks following question period.

The Speaker: The member for Oriole has adjourned the debate. The House will resume sitting at 1:30 of the clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1202 to 1330.

LEADER OF THE THIRD PARTY

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe that we have unanimous consent for the member for Nickel Belt to make a statement to the Legislature and the other two parties to respond.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Do we have unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): Thank you, Mr Speaker, and my thanks to my colleagues in the House for allowing me to do this and for them taking part in it as well.

It has been 14 years since I started working with the member for York South when he became leader of this party, and during those 14 years it has been turbulent at times—not our relationship of course, but the times have been turbulent. Any time you go from third party to government and then back to third party—I'll say it before you do—it's turbulent. I don't like to think it's returning to your roots, but I do know that political life is very turbulent and unpredictable.

I know as well that we would never have had the opportunity to be the government of this province as New Democrats if it had not been for Bob Rae as leader of New Democrats in this province. Of that I am absolutely certain.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I won't tell Stephen Lewis.

Mr Laughren: Don't tell him.

I must say that during those 14 years I've seen Bob Rae in many tight corners but I've seen him come out of those tight corners in every case keeping his perspective with courage and with dignity.

Hon Bob Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): A few bruises.

Mr Laughren: And bruises on top of that. That's absolutely correct.

When we were in government, it is not possible to govern—perhaps it never was—it's certainly not possible in the 1990s to govern without making some very, very difficult decisions, as this government is learning. There are differences, of course, in that we made the right decisions, or at least we thought we made the right decisions.

But I must say that I was always impressed by the creativity of the Premier of the day.

Perhaps I shouldn't confess this, but I can recall a couple of occasions when I would have thrown up my hands, and I'll give you a specific example: on the employee ownership issues. They were so difficult and so complex that there were several times during those negotiations that I would have thrown up my hands and said, "I don't think we can make this happen, even though we've tried hard." But the Premier did not do that. He just dug in a little harder, worked a little harder, worked a lot longer and made those employee ownership deals happen, which made an enormous difference to communities like Sault Ste Marie and Kapuskasing. That always impressed me a great deal.

I can remember, in my role as Minister of Finance, I often used to bring Premier Rae information from Finance that was invariably horrible, absolutely horrible. If he had believed in shooting the messenger, I'd look a lot more like Swiss cheese than I do today, because it really was amazingly difficult during those five years with the way revenues kept falling off the table.

But he always dealt with it with good humour, a certain amount of toughness from time to time, and I must say, when I talk about difficult decisions, there were many of them and the Premier and I did not always agree. I know you'll be amazed to know that. We did not always agree, but I must say that he was always supportive at the end of the day and that really was what counted. At the end of the debates we invariably came together.

I keep going back to the word "dignity," Mr Speaker, because I can tell you that I saw some instances where I'm not sure I would have kept mine. When I saw the billboards that were put up—very, very personally insulting billboards put up in this province—that could only have been put up by people who spend their lives wallowing in bad taste, nevertheless we treated that and the Premier himself treated those with a certain amount of humour and acceptance that public life is difficult and those things, from time to time, will happen.

I don't want to make Bob Rae sound as though he's perfect. I want to point out a fault while I have the opportunity. His fault is that he has a poor memory. He told us this one day at cabinet when we were in a particularly difficult debate. He admitted that his memory was poor as he looked me straight in the eye when we were in disagreement and said, "I don't want you to think that I even remember that you did not support me for the leadership back in 1982," and he assured me he'd forgotten that I'd been on the other side of that struggle.

Interjection.

Mr Laughren: Well, yes, it's true. But I must say, and Bob referred to it this morning, that when you're in difficult situations, a bonding exercise does occur. We became better friends in government than we had been in opposition because of the struggles that you go through together, and I'm sure that happens to other people as well.

Of course I think that Bob was also sustained a lot by the media in this province. I mean the obsequious fawning over him, particularly by the three Toronto tabloids,

which day after day were heaping praise on him. Now they've had to transfer it to the new Premier of course, but the new Premier will get used to that, I'm sure.

But I really shouldn't trivialize the sustaining part of it. Anybody who knows Bob Rae knows that he is sustained more by his family than by any other aspect of his life, and I think that came through in his comments this morning. You need only see them together to know that that's the case. His family now will be able to reclaim him from a broader world, and what a joyous reclamation project that must be for them. I'm sure they're all looking forward to that.

Comments about Bob Rae wouldn't be complete without a reference to the role he played in federal-provincial relations. His role went way beyond this province and his concerns went way beyond this province on the whole issue of national unity and his understanding and the way in which he was able to articulate the needs and the problems. I very much hope that there will be a way in which he will involve himself in the inevitable debate that will occur again on the national unity issue. I very much hope that he will be able to involve himself in one way or another in that regard.

I feel very strongly that Bob Rae has changed the province of Ontario by his presence here in the last 14 years, and particularly in the five years in government. While I don't expect everybody to agree with a lot of the initiatives he took as Premier, I don't think many people would disagree that they were based on the need to make this province more humane and more equitable. If you think about all those initiatives, that's largely what they were designed to do.

I know that I have been changed, I believe this Legislature has been changed, and you can't go back to what we were before, because of what we did in the last five years. Political life, as I said earlier, is turbulent and unpredictable but it's also honourable, and I know of no one who leaves public life having been through as much as he has with as much honour as Bob Rae is about to do.

I would simply say that we will miss you, Bob. I personally will miss you a great deal. You certainly leave us in this caucus with all our respect and affection and, quite frankly, a better understanding than we had before of what we owe one another.

1340

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): I'm pleased to be able to join on behalf of my caucus in acknowledging Mr Rae's contributions to politics and to the people of this province. I have to acknowledge that I want to use this occasion, as is appropriate, to say some rather complimentary things about Mr Rae, but I have a little bit of reservation at the outset and I should share it with you. I know Bob has said he is leaving politics but I understand he has also said he is young enough to return. So I would like an assurance from him that anything I am about to say will never appear on a campaign pamphlet in the future.

I have not known Bob as long as some of my colleagues, because I joined the Legislature, came into provincial politics, some time after he did. But he and I have both been members of this House during what I

think we have all described as a rather tumultuous period, with each of us having kaleidoscopically changing roles and circumstances over that time. I remember being a cabinet minister besieged by Mr Rae's opposition leadership, an opposition leader against his government, and now a sort of colleague in the leadership of opposition.

I can tell you, Mr Speaker, it is easier to be a sort of colleague than to be up against him. No one would ever doubt the debating skills of Bob Rae, and those skills have made him truly formidable in this Legislature, even when he was defending his government policies that we thought were so completely indefensible. But no matter how much we may have disagreed, as is the wont of opposition, with what he was doing, he always made it sound interesting.

In all of his roles Bob Rae has been a passionate spokesperson for social democracy and social conscience. He has carried forward all his responsibilities with flair, with intelligence and with intensity, and in all his roles I believe he has demonstrated an openness and a willingness to hear all points of view. The desire to build consensus, as elusive as it may be, is nevertheless a sign of true leadership.

It seems to me too that Bob has always kept a clear perspective on what this business of politics is all about and why it matters. As a result, he has respected all who share in the political process and contribute to it, of whatever party. He has never forgotten, I believe, that government is about people. This is one of the things that I have particularly respected in Bob Rae. I may have disagreed with his government's policies or his government's management, but I have never questioned that he was genuinely concerned for this province and its future and its people.

I thought over the weekend of what the essence of Bob Rae's contribution to politics in Ontario has been and I thought it was interesting that I came to the same conclusion that he came to in making his statement this morning about what he thinks is the essence of his contribution, and that is that his reason for being in politics has been to serve the public good and that he has always viewed politics as public service.

He has made as well, as is widely recognized and was recognized by his colleague the member for Nickel Belt again today, a strong commitment to this country and to ensuring that it stays both united and strong in the future. His eloquence and his passion, expressed in both official languages, were the basis of a valued contribution to the unity debates and deliberations.

It is for all those reasons that I am indeed sorry to see him leave not only the leadership of his party but elected politics. We need his voice, and I trust it will still be heard loudly and clearly in many different forums—although again I express one reservation, because I do hope that he doesn't seek to find that voice on the musical stage. I think that would be a true loss of genuine skill and the tremendous knowledge and experience that Bob can bring to future roles in public life.

I am sure that Bob's family has no regret at all about his decision. As the member for Nickel Belt has said, political life is very demanding on families, and although it is a life that Arlene has clearly shared fully with Bob,

I would imagine they are both looking forward to being able to spend more of their time together in the peace and the privacy of their family.

So, Bob, on behalf of all the members of my caucus, let me express appreciation to you for your commitment and your contribution and wish you much personal fulfilment in the future.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I want to say a couple of things, first of all, in response to some of which has already been stated from the leader of the official opposition. I too believe that the former Premier and member for York South and leader of the New Democratic Party is too young to not be back involved in politics at some point in time. However, I've learned something, a lesson, and that is, whatever you say, in whatever forum, can and will and ought to be on the public record and ever potentially used against you. So I give permission for my remarks to be reprinted in any campaign brochure at any time.

I also found the comments from the member for Nickel Belt—you know, he and I have shared a lot of things in common as well, and I found out one new one today, in that neither he nor I supported Mr Rae for leader of his party. That's just another in the long list of things we have worked together on—not everything, but some.

I have had the opportunity now to sit across from and alongside Mr Rae in this House for some 14 years, and I want to say a few words personally and on behalf of our caucus and on behalf of those members of our caucus over that 14 years, many of whom, thanks actually to Bob Rae, were not re-elected from time to time.

Progressive Conservatives in this country have learned over the years to be wary of Mr Rae, and this wariness sprang, as it usually does, out of the sense of two things: respect and fear. And there was clearly respect for the exceptional political talents that Mr Rae possesses. The fear was inspired by something else, the fact that Mr Rae twice played an integral part in the downfall of Tory minority governments. I know, as I say those words, that these were painful experiences for Canadian Progressive Conservatives. Perhaps some members of the official opposition caucus remember them as far more delightful circumstances, but for their benefit I add that while it was indeed painful for them, it was not long before Mr Rae also learned a thing or two about humbling governments, even in a majority situation of a different stripe, and did so very successfully.

It was soon after my own arrival in this House that Mr Rae came from Ottawa to take up the leadership of the New Democratic Party. For 14 years we have sparred in this House, but I want to go back to my thoughts 14 years ago and clearly put on the record something that reinforces what I believe was stated by the member for Nickel Belt: that when Mr Rae assumed his position as leader of the third party at that particular time, I believed, as did quite frankly a significant majority of people, including my own caucus when I assumed the leadership from the third-place party, that Mr Rae would never be Premier of the province of Ontario. That was just a given in my thinking at the time, and I acknowledge that, and probably it was that kind of thinking that assisted Mr Rae to become Premier, but I agree with the member for

Nickel Belt that I don't think the party would have assumed the position of the government of the province without Mr Rae's leadership.

I've sparred in this House with Mr Rae. Our political differences are many. Those I believe are only the stuff of politics. More enduring than the ebb and flow of political battles won or lost, I have known Mr Rae to demonstrate exceptional integrity, principle and, I would say, commitment in his service to this province. I believe it has been to the entire province, to all segments of the province. I think he has striven to provide that, in opposition and in government.

1350

Earlier today, the member for York South talked about the number of decisions he had made and acknowledged that some were mistakes, and with some only time would tell whether they were the right decisions or the wrong decisions, would prove to be correct or incorrect. He said, though, always, in every one of those decisions, right or wrong or yet to be judged, he tried to do the right thing, both as a member and as Premier. I applaud that. I say to all members of the Legislature that this is indeed, I hope, what all of us aspire to. That is an example, certainly, for all of us to follow.

I think it was Benjamin Disraeli who said, "Man is only truly great when he acts from the passions." No observer of recent political life of this province could help but agree that Mr Rae is deeply passionate about Ontario and its people. I looked hard to find a Disraeli quote that would fit Mr Rae and I think this one does, because it is a passion that stands as an example to all those who aspire to public life. When brought to this House, it's a passion that credits this institution. Indeed, it credits all of us. He has projected and continues to project a deep passion for public service.

He has served in a time, and still today, when faith in political office has been diminished. Mr Rae worked to restore that faith, I believe. He is one of us who consider politics to be an honourable profession and wants to be able to continue, through children and grandchildren, to be proud of the honourable profession of political life. I think his exercise of political office has been consistent with this.

Despite the many difficulties that accompany any public career, it was often remarked that Mr Rae found a certain personal joy in political service. Just when you would think that he must be having a rough week, Mr Rae would slide on the stool of the piano out there, set up in the main legislative building for the holiday season, and he'd start banging out a tune. I want to tell you that I liked the sound of you banging on the ivories a lot more than the sound of you banging on my ministers in question period. I want you to bear that in mind if you wish to play a tune over the next hour.

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): Bring in the piano.

Hon Mr Harris: I'll bring the piano in. I think we can do that.

I know Canada is also a passion of Mr Rae's. It's a passion that we share. Time and again, he stood up on behalf of all Canadians to speak forcefully in support of this wonderful country. From his determined efforts on

the Charlottetown accord to his very emotional defence of Canada on Quebec open-line shows during this last year's referendum, his contributions to national unity were legion and I believe they are a lasting legacy. I would like to say that I have accepted and sought his counsel in my short time in this position, and I would like the member to know that I would like to continue to be able to do that in the weeks and months and years ahead as we wrestle with an unresolved problem that is confronting our country.

We all, as the leader of the Liberal Party has indicated, admire Mr Rae's exceptional support of family. Every member of this House knows the strain that the rigours of the profession can place on a family. I can't help but envy Bob in his new freedom to spend time with Arlene and the girls. I want to say that it's very difficult for anybody—you can guess, you can think about it—to know the stress and the burdens on the family of one who is Premier of the province of Ontario. Arlene has offered support to my wife, support that undoubtedly she will continue to need. I want to say that to have been able to find the time to share that indicates the deep understanding that she has of the family commitment to this job.

I have a feeling, I think many do, that Bob Rae will be around. I wanted to say that when I indicated at the beginning that I'm on the record, I hope he is around, that he continues to lend his talents and his energies to the service of our province and to the service of our country and to the service of me personally, understanding that it is me, the Office of the Premier. I understand the difference.

On behalf of the people of Ontario, might I also extend thanks to Mr Rae for his service to this province, wish him and his wonderful family every success in the years to come.

Mr Bob Rae (York South): I feel I had my chance earlier today, so I will not give another speech—

Mr Chris Stockwell (Etobicoke West): Ah, do it again.

Mr Rae: —though I know the member from Etobicoke would like me to.

I just want to say first of all that I feel a little bit like Tom Sawyer did when he had a chance to listen to the comments made at his own funeral. Short of one other experience in life, I think there are very few opportunities other than retirement to hear so many nice things said. I'm obviously embarrassed by them, but not so embarrassed that I won't remember them and appreciate them. I really do personally appreciate everything that's been said here today.

Just a couple of comments, if I may. First of all, Mr Speaker, I'd like to express my thanks to you, sir, and to the officers of this House who have served me personally with a great deal of professionalism and kindness at all times. The Hansard reporters have put up with my mumblings and the Clerk has put up with some obscure legal point that I was trying to make and each and every Speaker has always been fair as far as I'm concerned, and I do appreciate very much those courtesies and those kindnesses which have been given to me.

Just a brief word. My colleague from Nickel Belt refers to the poor taste of some posters. Members opposite will no doubt recall the large photograph of me next to a donkey that was widely distributed in the province. I was asked how I felt about it, and I said I didn't mind but I thought the Tory candidates might object to having their picture taken with me.

The Premier referred to the difficulty he found getting a Disraeli quote. I think there are more Disraeli quotes that I would be comfortable with than his government would be comfortable with at the moment. In fact, I have a bust of Benjamin Disraeli outside my door in thinking there are at least some Conservatives that I can relate to. I would say that in my new life I'm finding that more and more as well. As for the Premier's preference that I should spend more time on the ivories than on his ministers, I would say that I've found in recent days there's a little bit more give on the ivories than there is from some of his ministers. But only time will tell.

To the Leader of the Opposition, let me say this: I admired tremendously her work in government. Her reputation as a very fine and talented minister was widespread in the government and in the public service. I can't say that I appreciated all of her work in opposition because she was a very tough critic, and that's part of what one has to do in this job. Part of what's in place is that we're, in a sense, assigned certain responsibilities. But I have, it's fair to say, enjoyed the last few months of our relationship a great deal.

To all of you, let me say thank you for your kindnesses and for your courtesies. The Premier and I have served together. We've disagreed, but I appreciate very much the comments that he has made today. If he were to resign today, I'd say nice things about him as well.

1400

OMNIBUS LEGISLATION

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: Would it be possible to seek unanimous consent of the House to amend the orders of the day in order to extend the debate on Bill 26 beyond 6 o'clock?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): I hear some nos.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I seek your counsel on this point of order. It's with respect to a matter that took place during the hearings and clause-by-clause of Bill 26 within the purview of the standing committee on general government.

On Tuesday, January 23, I tabled a motion with the clerk of the committee and the Chair of the committee and indicated that I was giving notice of an intent to move that motion but that I didn't want to, at that point in time, interfere with proceeding to the clause-by-clause analysis of the bill.

The content of the motion, just so you're aware of it, was with respect to what happens after the committee had finished dealing with Bill 26 and this Legislature, if it passes it today, had done so. It was with respect to a

request from the standing committee on general government to the House leader of the government to bring forward the regulations under Bill 26 and send them to the standing committee on general government so there could be a process of public review of those regulations, given, as you know, in the structure of the bill, that so much is left to the regulatory power of cabinet. That motion, it seemed to me, would be appropriately debated if and when the committee had finished its work with respect to Bill 26, that being the work of the week which was clause-by-clause.

You may know that we were operating under the order of a motion of the House that set out the time allocation for Bill 26, set out the weeks of public hearings and travel, and the week of January 22, from 10 am to 6 pm, to deal with clause-by-clause. During the course of that week, it was set out that on Friday, at the end of the week, at 1 o'clock, we would begin at that point in time to deal with any amendments that had not yet been dealt with. Again, just for your edification, you should know that we had moved maybe a third of the way through the bill. Two thirds of the bill was left undebated in terms of the amendments, which were proceeded on just with a vote and no debate, no questions, at that point in time.

There was a provision within the order that would allow for the committee to sit past 6 of the clock if in fact we had not completed the clause-by-clause. That was not necessary. It was some time approaching 5:30 or so when the committee finished that work.

At that point I sought, as a member of the committee with the right to move motions, a voting member of the committee, to place my motion before that committee so that we could determine whether or not there was an agreement of all the members of that committee to request the government to bring forward its regulations under this bill for public scrutiny, given the problems we have had right from the beginning with respect to this bill: the lack of desire on the part of the government for proper public hearings, for proper participation by the public in this process, and of course, as we saw last week, its lack of desire to have proper debate of the amendments or to allow the bill to be examined in its fullness.

At that time, the Chair of the committee ruled that I was out of order, that in fact there was nothing the committee could do but proceed with the clause-by-clause and then adjourn. I point out to you again that it was before 6 of the clock. The committee time for sitting had not expired. I had given notice of this motion and had in fact at that time attempted to move it.

I attempted to appeal to the Chair, and the Chair simply struck his gavel, adjourned the committee and left the room. That left me no ability in that process to appeal the ruling of the Chair and/or to have a reconsideration of that so I would be in a position to bring forward for you, Mr Speaker, a question for final disposition if the Chair had continued to rule against me.

I have to say that from the beginning of the introduction of this bill, through the whole process of before-Christmas debate, where it took extraordinary means on the part of the opposition to even get the government to agree to public hearings, to the weeks we spent on the

road travelling, where hundreds and hundreds of people were turned away from their opportunity to participate in public hearings and to have their voices heard, to the colossal display of incompetence last week during clause-by-clause, where we see that we're not able to get through the bill in a timely fashion or in a full exploration of the issues, and scrambling at the last moment to have amendments filed, it has been of great frustration to me as a member not to have a process by which a full democratic opportunity for exploration of this bill was provided.

In the last moments of that committee, my motion was an attempt to, after the fact, provide an opportunity for a full democratic review of the regulations, which will be in fact the governing measures underneath this bill. I was denied the opportunity to place that motion by the Chair.

Mr Speaker, I would ask you to look into that and I would ask you to determine and to rule whether there was a violation of my rights as a member of that committee and what remedy we might be able to seek if you do find that there was a violation.

ORAL QUESTIONS

OMNIBUS LEGISLATION

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): Mr Speaker, I'm not surprised that there was no unanimous consent to even extend debate on this bill for a few hours today, because day after day throughout the hearings, throughout the committee's work, there has been a refusal from the government to give even a little more time to consider this draconian bill. So as I place my question to the Premier today, I say to him that there have been two things that have characterized your government's handling of this legislation. The first thing is incompetence, and the second thing is the bullying way in which you have tried to ram this bill through this Legislature and are still ramming this bill through the Legislature.

I say to you, Premier, since this is the only day you will come forward in asking questions, that it is you who are responsible for this incompetent piece of legislation. It is you who are responsible for the bullying way in which this legislation has been forced through. I hope you know that after having tried to force this through the Legislature before Christmas, after having been forced to take just a little bit of time to hold public hearings, that there were hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of people who came forward and wanted to make their views known, and that in fact group after group after group could not be heard, pleaded for the chance to be heard, pleaded for a little bit more time to understand your bill and to make their concerns known. Your government members on your behalf over and over again said no, so that you have prevented more than 1,000 groups and individuals in this province from even being heard.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Put your question, please.

Mrs McLeod: Premier, I ask you finally today how you can justify those bullying tactics, how you can justify

the silencing of hundreds and hundreds of people in this province.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I appreciate the opportunity to be able to respond on behalf of a piece of legislation that provided perhaps more hearing time than any legislation in my 14 years that I have been a member of the Legislature.

The number of hours that were provided for hearings were agreed upon by the three House leaders. They were not as many hours as we first offered; however, they were substantial. You will recall before Christmas, Mr Speaker, we offered three different committees instead of two for a period of time and actually more hours than the opposition finally decided they wanted.

Throughout this hearing process we heard from hundreds of delegations. Many of them were repetitive, but others were not. Also, the members of the committee and the members of the opposition fulfilled their role, as it was articulated by the member for York South today, to oppose and to make sure that opposing viewpoints are presented. I think they've done that quite well, judging by the press clippings I read after coming back from trying to drum up jobs for the province. The viewpoints in the media seemed to have been expressed—those that disagreed with Bill 26 and the purpose—quite well. So we appreciate the democratic process worked very well.

1410

Mrs McLeod: Mr Speaker, this Premier may appreciate the chance to respond, but I can tell you I do not appreciate the fact that this one hour is the one and only time when we can get either the Premier of this province or any minister responsible for this bill to come forward and answer our questions about this huge and sweeping bill. And I do not appreciate, Premier, your suggesting that you voluntarily entered into hearings in order to hear the concerns of the public when we had to force you to do that and when day after day you refused to allow enough time for people who wanted to be heard to be heard, and so you left 1,000 people who could not be heard.

Premier, you weren't there, but I can tell you that none of us appreciated the fact that last week there were 400 amendments presented to change this bill, to make it better than it is, at least a little bit better—amendments that tried to respond to some of the public concerns. Premier, 160 of those amendments came from your own government scrambling at the last minute to fix this awful bill. Only 50 of the 450 amendments that came forward could even be discussed in that committee, and yet you would not extend the hearings.

And I didn't appreciate, Premier, that neither you nor the Minister of Health nor the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing were prepared to come forward and answer the questions of the committee—maybe too embarrassed to come and defend this indefensible piece of legislation. I wonder, Premier, whether that was because maybe you just didn't have the time to read the bill. You said you didn't know the details. It didn't seem that you cared to find out the details.

I wonder, as we're about to pass the most sweeping, draconian piece of legislation this province has ever seen, when do you plan to find out what's in the bill? When do

you plan to hear the concerns? After this bill has been proclaimed?

Hon Mr Harris: Of course, not only I but our office and the ministers have been paying attention to the presentations that have been made, both oral presentations to the committee and of course the substantial number of written presentations we took the time to receive and review as well.

I think it's important, though, that we understand the purpose of this legislation, how it fits in with the overall agenda of this government to undo the damage of the last 10 years. Really, it boils down to a number. It's a comprehensive bill, but if there is an underlying or overriding theme of the legislation, it is—

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Power in the hands of the boys, the backroom boys.

The Speaker: The member for St Catharines.

Hon Mr Harris: —that the voters and the taxpayers have the power to decide how our schools are run, how our municipalities are run—not the union leaders, not the vested interests who stand to gain from it, but in fact it's going to be everyday people. It is going to be everyday union members, everyday police officers, everyday taxpayers.

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for Hamilton East.

Hon Mr Harris: They're going to make the decisions on how their dollars are spent. I would like to repeat that this legislation is required in order to undo the disastrous damage of the last 10 years that left us with an over-burgeoning bureaucracy and \$10 billion a year in deficits.

Mrs McLeod: Spin it as they will, this bill is about one thing and one thing only, and it is a government giving itself the powers that it wants to make cuts deep and fast to be able to deliver its income tax cut to the most well-to-do in this province. That is all this bill is all about. There have been some changes in the legislation to make it a little less bad than it was. Thank goodness it did not become law on December 14.

Let me say to this Premier that the biggest indictment of this bill is that neither you nor your senior ministers seem to have any idea, even the simplest understanding, of major portions of this legislation.

Let me remind you, Premier, that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing said this bill couldn't possibly allow a municipality to bring in a gas tax or a head tax, and if it could be shown to him that it did, he would resign. Well, we have no resignation, but we do have a little change in the legislation just in case the minister was wrong.

The Minister of Health said categorically before Christmas, "There is no problem here with the confidentiality of medical records," and the privacy commissioner said, "Oh yes, there is," and lo and behold, he had to make some changes in that legislation; or you, Premier, last week coming back and saying, "I don't think this legislation would actually allow municipalities to charge user fees for things like police and fire services"—

The Speaker: Put your question.

Mrs McLeod: —and yet in fact that is what is going to happen, and you didn't even care to find out that that's what this bill does, and we are left with a bullying bill

put through by a bullying government in a bullying way. I can only ask you, Premier, is that what we will see for the next four years, your government bringing in incompetent legislation and bullying it through this Legislature?

Hon Mr Harris: I appreciate the attempts of the leader of the official opposition to try and bully this government into rejecting the wishes of the people. You see, even after extensive campaigning a year before the election, after the election, post-election, even after more hearings in the history of a bill since I've been elected in 14 years, more hearings than the whole 34th Parliament that the Liberal Party was in charge of, more hours of hearings for a bill than the entire 35th Parliament when the New Democratic Party was there, for some reason or other the leader of the Liberal Party still wants to hang on to this status quo of a bloated government that's falling behind the rest of the provinces, that's falling behind the rest of our competitors; wants to hang on to this spending of \$1 million an hour more than the dollars that come in; wants to hang on to the \$10-billion annual deficits.

We were elected to change that status quo, to restore hope and opportunity, to bring jobs back to this province, to give an opportunity for our children today and tomorrow, and that's exactly what we are going to do.

Mrs McLeod: Bullying has never exactly been my style, but I think I know how to recognize a bully when I see one, and I say again that this is a bully bill being pushed through by a bully government. I ask, what's the first thing that a bully does? It seems to me that it is to take as much power as he can get, no matter what rules have to be broken and no matter who gets stepped on in order to get it. I say that this bill is a bully bill because it is the most extensive and intrusive and invasive power grab in Ontario's history. This is a bill that would make any bully proud.

One example, just one: This is a bill that gives the Minister of Health the right to come in and shut down a hospital in a community without paying very much attention to anyone. He doesn't have to talk to people who run the hospitals or people who work there or people the hospital serves. He doesn't even have to check with the local MPP, even if it's one of his own members, or even his colleagues in cabinet or even, Premier, with you. That's what this bill is all about: It is giving massive and unfettered powers to ministers so they can bully people and get their way.

Premier, I ask you, why do you think that your government has to dictate to people and bully them? Why do you think this is how you govern the people of this province?

Hon Mr Harris: This piece of legislation, far from dictating, in fact responds to requests of volunteer members of hospital boards from across the province, from municipal councillors—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon Mr Harris: —it responds in fact to the restructuring initiatives that were begun by the former government and the former Minister of Health that was there.

Interjections.

1420

The Speaker: Order. Would the House come to order, please. I'd like to hear the question and I'd like to hear the answer without a lot of shouting going on.

Hon Mr Harris: This bill, as I said, responds to those thousands, indeed hundreds of thousands of Ontarians who have asked for changes in order that they can run hospitals more efficiently, run municipalities more efficiently, run school boards more efficiently, run colleges, run universities more efficiently.

I would like to say that, quite frankly, this bill does take some power away from some. It takes it away from some union leaders where clearly the people of Ontario said, "It is our elected representatives, it is our boards, it is we the people, we the taxpayers who are going to make decisions as to how our dollars are spent." Quite frankly, if we are going to be able to help children, help the needy, help the unemployed, help those on welfare, we can't carry on the old ways of the former government.

Mrs McLeod: I don't think the Premier really has any idea what this bill does or what powers it gives not only to his cabinet but to individual ministers. I suspect he doesn't know how hard we had to fight to at least limit the ability of his Minister of Health to override every other act of the province of Ontario as he carries out his unilateral decisions to close down hospitals. This bill allows you to grab power, to break rules, to change laws that don't suit you and to railroad over people's rights.

One of the most astonishing aspects of this bill—and I'm sure you must be aware of this—is that it will overturn court decisions that would say you were acting illegally. There are some in the legal community who would suggest that in many places this bill actually violates the Constitution.

I want to make sure that you understand and that everyone understands at least one part of this: that Mike Harris tried to raid the pensions of civil servants. He tried to limit their rights to money that they have saved for their pensions. He found out that it wasn't legal to do that, so what did Mike Harris decide to do? He decided to give himself powers beyond the law to overrule the courts, to pave the road for a full-scale assault on the pension funds of civil servants. That's the Premier's response even to court rulings: Rewrite them, overrule them, ignore them, trample on people's rights; do whatever it takes to get what you want. I don't think that is what people were expecting when they elected the Conservatives.

On what page of the Common Sense Revolution, your election manifesto, did you pledge to pass legislation allowing you to ignore court decisions and raid pension funds?

Hon Mr Harris: I don't know where the leader of the official opposition has been for the last five years, when the former government took a holiday from contributing to the pension plans on the basis of the social contract, but I want to tell you that it is the intention of this government to live up to the law of the land, the Constitution of the land, and to make sure that we contribute to and account fairly for the pension contributions for each and every single person who works for the province.

I want to tell you that the civil servants working in the province, and those for whom we the government of

Ontario are responsible for pensions, can be 100% more secure with their pensions today than they were before we were elected.

Mrs McLeod: I know where I've been for the last five years and I know where I've been for the last three weeks, because I've been with this committee. I've been on the road. I've been listening to those hundreds of people who brought forward evidence about their concerns, their fears of what this bill is going to do to them in the future. I have heard presentation after presentation express concerns about the kinds of powers you are taking unto yourself. You seem to suggest that none of it's going to matter; it's not going to hurt anyone.

Let me tell you, Premier, that when all the shouting's done, what's going to be left is a great deal of fear, because this is going to change the face of Ontario, and it is not going to change the face of Ontario for the better. It's already started. The fears are already being realized.

You didn't think that municipalities would have power under this bill to be able to charge people for essential services like fire and police. Well, let me tell you that the town of Thorold has indicated they're going to charge non-residents \$900 an hour for fire services. The Stoney Creek fire department has come up with a proposed list of fees to be charged for fire services in their area.

I know you're getting some whispered advice from the colleague next to you, but you should know these things before you pass a bill, because this is just the beginning of what we're going to see. I wonder whether or not that is your vision of Ontario, Premier. Is your vision of Ontario a place where people have to check their wallets before they can even call for help from the police department or the fire department? Is that your vision of the future of Ontario?

Hon Mr Harris: The leader of the official opposition talks about the fear that's out there, and quite frankly it is the irresponsible fearmongering of members such as her that is causing this problem. Let me assure the people of Ontario that there are municipalities now that charge other municipalities for fire services. Nothing in the legislation changes that. That's been going on for a considerable period of time.

It is our goal that all residents of Ontario will share and pay fairly for fire and police. Nobody in the province should ever, as a result of Bill 26, have any fear of calling the fire department or the police department and not expecting them to respond. In fact, by getting our finances in order and by getting the accountability mechanisms in order, we can guarantee that we'll have these services not only today but in the future, and that was not guaranteed when we took office.

TAX AND FEE INCREASES

Mr Bob Rae (York South): I have a question to the Premier: Premier, you're widely quoted as having said over the years that a fee hike is the same as a tax hike. Is that still your view?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Sometimes it could be; other times it's not. It could be very, very different. If—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Do you want to hear the answer? Order.

Mr Rae: The Premier is also widely quoted in the past as having said that tax increases by any level of government anywhere in Canada will destroy jobs. I wonder if the Premier would tell us, since he's now saying that sometimes a fee increase is like a tax increase, sometimes it isn't—only time will tell when that is and when that isn't, I suppose—he would then—

Interjections.

Mr Rae: The concern I have is what's happening to jobs. Overall in the province, that's still the focus of most people's attention. The cause of the fear that's out there today is because we had a strong year of recovery in 1994, 1995 was not as strong as many of us had hoped, and 1996 is bumping along.

I would like to ask the Premier whether he would not admit that there's a very real possibility that the layoffs that are now going to be imposed by every level of the public sector—his government, municipal governments, the education tax cuts, education layoffs—plus the prospect of significant fee hikes by municipalities, boards of education and others who are having to deal with the size of the cuts being imposed by his government, will in effect slow down the potential for growth and the potential for jobs recovery. Does the Premier not see that danger, and would he not agree with me that the fee hikes that are now the same as a tax hike that are being caused by Bill 26 in fact will have that very real effect?

Hon Mr Harris: Clearly, it's not our intention to see the total take going into governments up as a result of Bill 26 or any actions. In fact, it is our expectation that they will be down. For example, there will be new tolls for Highway 407 when it is open that you commissioned and constructed. It is like a tax for those who are using the road, but those who don't use the road will not find it as part of a general tax.

You seem to want some explanation of when is a toll or a fee a user fee or a tax, and when is it different, and how is it the same? If it is a service we all want to use, or all share in and all benefit in, then generally we would like to see that paid out of general taxation.

1430

The second part of the question deals with the downsizing, I believe, of the number of public sector jobs. He is quite right that the combination, particularly at the federal government level—far in excess actually of the provincial government level, but we understand they have to get their affairs in order as well or we're not going to get private sector job creation. This does have a drag on the economy. However, both Mr Chrétien and the federal government and ourselves and our government and virtually every other province, including the province governed by Roy Romanow in Saskatchewan, including the NDP government of British Columbia, have concluded this: that unless we get our finances in order, unless we get our public sector the right size, it will be far more devastating to private sector job creation and growth.

So it is a delicate balance. We feel you didn't have it quite right and we're working to correct it.

Mr Rae: The Premier, in a former incarnation, used to say that a fee hike is the same as a tax hike. He used to

say that tax increases by any level of government anywhere in Canada will destroy jobs. Bill 26 authorizes a widespread hunt for the taxpayer through an attack on the fee structure that's unlike anything we've ever seen. It makes anything done by previous governments a tea party by comparison.

The last page of the Common Sense Revolution, the appendix, looks at the years 1997-98, 1998-99, 1999-2000, and in each case they're looking at nominal growth of close to 5%, 4.65%. I want to ask the Premier, since this is the road you're marching us down, based on what you have now put in place, would you not now recognize that to achieve those growth rates with the kind of strategy that you're putting in place—mass layoffs, huge fee increases—is at best most unlikely and that in fact it puts into doubt and puts into question the rest of your so-called agenda?

Hon Mr Harris: I would agree with the leader of the New Democratic Party in this: that were we to do nothing, getting those kinds of growth rates that Ontario deserves and should have would be very difficult. But taking the actions that we're taking and being responsible in getting our affairs under control, for example, with the Workers' Compensation Board, restoring the balance, bringing in tax reductions to create jobs, we're very confident that we will meet those objectives.

Mr Rae: I'd be interested to see what the consensus coming out of Davos is with respect to the realism of projecting close to 5% real growth next year on the basis of the stuff you're doing now. I don't think there's a soul out there who would agree that that's a likely result and consequence of what you're doing. Not one analyst, not one observer, not one person on the scene is coming up with those kinds of rates, and that is the premise of everything else that you're putting in place.

PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Mr Bob Rae (York South): On February 22, 1995, the leader of the Conservative Party said, and I quote: "There's a belief that the political process is artificial and doesn't provide voters with a chance for genuine input. We must change that." I wonder if the Premier can tell us, does he feel that the voters of the province have had a chance for genuine input with respect to Bill 26?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Yes. I think that we have provided actually more than enough hours for all genuine input.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): There were hundreds of people turned away. Why weren't they genuine?

Mr Rae: The evidence will show that there were over 1,000 people whom I presume the Premier's saying are not genuine. We now have an interesting characterization of two kinds of people in the province: Those who are genuine and friends of the government and those who are not genuine who are genuinely opposed to the government. Well, I think a lot more genuinely opposed people will emerge.

The Premier should know—I'm not sure if he does know—that on Friday afternoon the committee scrapped the proxy pay equity, they took pension rights away from

government employees, they gave sweeping new powers to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, and none of those changes, none of the clause-by-clause and none of the amendments had one second of serious discussion. Do you still stand by your first answer in saying that the province had serious input into this legislation?

Hon Mr Harris: Very interesting that Bill 175, which may have been what prompted my comments about input, was brought in by Bob Rae, Premier. It amended more statutes, it affected more ministries than Bill 26, and it received the grand total of zero committee time, not one minute of committee time.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): That was then; this is now.

Hon Mr Harris: Now, maybe that was then and this is now, but this Bill 26 had more committee time than any bill has received in this Legislature since I was elected, more than any bill in your entire time in government, more than any bill in the entire time of the Liberal government of the 34th Parliament.

There will be some who will say no amount of time is enough if you don't get your own way, and I understand that there are some union leaders, there are some vested interests that have more or less had their own way with you for five years and they do not have their own way now. Now there is a balance and the taxpayer is starting to get a little bit of say in government policy.

Mr Rae: If it was such a terrible exercise, Bill 175, why would the Conservative Party of the day as well as the official opposition have agreed to it after a six-month period? After a six-month discussion on Bill 175, why weren't the public galleries full? Why weren't there demonstrations outside? I'll tell you why, because there's no comparison between Bill 175 and what you're doing with the omnibus bill and the omnibus legislation, no comparison at all.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order, order. The member for London North.

Mr Rae: The Minister of Health will get his turn later on in the session. I want to conclude by asking the Premier how he can justify a process under which when opposition members tried to find out what was happening, the Chair of the committee said, "No questions, no debate," with respect to several critical areas which you yourself have indicated by your answers today you don't even begin to understand with respect to your answer on public sector pensions.

Why would you not recognize that Bill 26 is being forced down the throats of the people of this province against their will, against their expressed opposition and most importantly against the very document upon which you based your last election campaign, the Common Sense Revolution, which you have effectively torn up by bringing in Bill 26?

Hon Mr Harris: I noted on December 8 that the leader of the official opposition, whom I thought you agreed with on this, said, "We now have a substantial amount of time to look at this bill." That's, quite frankly, after we agreed to 300 hours of committee time for Bill 26. Not only was it a substantial amount of time, it was

more time than either one of you two parties provided to any piece of legislation in your history of governing the province of Ontario, at least in modern-day history.

HEALTH CARE

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): My question is to the Premier, and as I listened to his answers I know why faith has been diminished in this province. I say to you, Premier, since November 29, exactly two short months ago, when your government secretly tabled this bill, I have been listening to people throughout this province. Unlike your ministers, I attended the committees so that I could listen to what people had to say, and today as I ask my questions, I'm asking on behalf of those who care about what you are doing. They are not vested interests, Premier—

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): And they are genuine.

Mrs Caplan: —and they are genuine and their concerns are real, and you must listen to them.

1440

There are so many sections of Bill 26 that are beyond offensive. Your Minister of Health will be able to micro-manage health care. He can unilaterally close hospitals, and you and your cabinet colleagues will be able to determine what is medically necessary. But what is most offensive to people throughout the province who believed you, Premier, believed you during the last election when you promised that you would not cut health care and when you promised no new user fees—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Put your question.

Mrs Caplan: Premier, Bill 26 will force the poorest seniors, the sick, the physically disabled, mentally disabled and families with children on social assistance to pay user fees for the prescriptions that their doctors say are medically necessary. Even your supporters who came before us in support of the bill said, "Do not do this to the most vulnerable."

The Speaker: Put your question, please.

Mrs Caplan: Premier, what do you say to the most vulnerable people who trusted you when you said, "No new user fees," when you said, "A copayment is a user fee"? What do you say to those people?

The Speaker: The question's been asked.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I say, one of the finest ministers of Health in the province of Ontario will be pleased to answer that question.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): As I said this morning with respect to the copayments on the Ontario drug benefit plan, this government was faced with an affordability problem, a sustainability problem with that plan. What we've not heard from the opposition, from the honourable member for Oriole or any of the opposition colleagues are other solutions to saving the plan, given that her federal colleague pretty soon is going to hit us with about a \$1-billion whack in health care.

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Hamilton East.

Hon Mr Wilson: We preserved, consistent with our campaign and Common Sense Revolution promises, the

health care budget at \$17.4 billion. We're going to take a tremendous hit in the months and weeks ahead from the federal government. We're not pointing fingers, but we are preparing our programs, and by asking everyone who benefits, the 1.2 million people who benefit from the Ontario drug benefit plan, and coming into consistency with the other provinces, by asking everyone to contribute a little bit, we were able to expand that plan, as the member for Oriole knows, to cover an additional 140,000 working poor, which is good news for those people who weren't on welfare and weren't over age 65 but still needed help with catastrophic drug costs in this province.

Now everyone in this province can afford the drugs they need to recover from their illnesses and receive the treatments they need. We think that's good news. We had the courage to bring in the copayment when other governments studied it. We had to do it to keep the program afloat, to keep it sustainable and to ensure that there was some fairness brought back to those services in the province.

Mrs Caplan: To the minister, at least be honest and come clean on this one. You did not consult with the Ontario Hospital Association or the Ontario Medical Association or the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario or the Ontario Nurses' Association, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the Ontario Nursing Home Association; everyone who came before the committee said there was no consultation before this bill. Everyone who came before the committee said that you had promised to consult and that they would be willing to help you find the solutions. I have said that I would be willing to help you find the solutions as a former minister.

To stand in your place today and to say that you are actually saving the drug plan is absolutely ridiculous, because \$225 million that you are cutting from that plan is going directly to your 30% income tax rate cut. You have to find \$5 billion to give a tax cut to the wealthiest Ontarians. User fees are being put in place, not to save the drug plan; Minister, user fees are being put in place so you can give that tax cut. How can you, Minister of Health, justify giving an individual who earns \$150,000 a year a tax break of \$5,000 when you are asking sick and poor seniors, the physically and the mentally disabled and single moms with young children to pay for their medicine, when everyone tells you that is bad health policy? How can you stand in your place and do that when it broke your campaign promise? Shame on you.

Hon Mr Wilson: The member for Oriole raises a number of points. First of all, we all know that the Ontario drug plan was growing by 18% per year, with the exception of last year, when the NDP, rather than bring in copayments as the other nine provinces have done, delisted 250 drugs, some of those drugs that seniors are now paying 100% out of their own pockets for. We didn't want to take that route; it didn't make any sense. So we're not asking the poor to pay the full cost—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Oriole.

Hon Mr Wilson: What they pay is the \$2 for each prescription. We think it's a very reasonable and minimalist approach.

We also took some of the savings from those copayments and to the system and reinvested it to lower the

deductible on the Trillium drug plan from \$500 to \$350. Again, we're trying to keep the program afloat, to keep it sustainable. We're in line with the other provinces and you know as well as I do, Ms Caplan, that many groups came to committee, seniors themselves, representing large numbers of seniors. I have the quote here that says, "It's long overdue and we don't mind paying a bit as long as it's fair." They said it was fair, the approach this government takes.

The Speaker: Leader of the third party.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The leader of the third party has the floor.

Mr Chris Stockwell (Etobicoke West): Come on, it's his last day, David. Give him a break. He still calls the shots.

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): I've learned that.

Mr Bob Rae (York South): That's right. The body's not cold yet.

MUNICIPAL TAXATION

Mr Bob Rae (York South): I have a question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. He will recall the exchange that he and I had prior to Christmas. The minister said, and I'm quoting—he's referring to me: "Your information is wrong." He said, "I don't know how many times I have to tell you this.... Smarten up." He then also said, "I don't know where you're getting this advice," that the advice is wrong. He then goes on to say—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order. Put the signs down, please, or I'll order them out.

Mr Rae: What I would like to ask is this: The minister then said: "The act"—he's referring to sales taxes and gas taxes and other taxes—"doesn't allow it. The act doesn't allow that kind of charge. Read it. It doesn't allow sales taxes, gas taxes or any of that type of tax. Go back to your lawyers and get them to look it over again."

Then he was asked in a scrum outside, "If you're found to be wrong on one of those answers, will you resign?" Mr Leach: "On income tax, gasoline or sales tax?" Mr Vaughan: "Yeah." Leach: "Yeah. Yeah."

Interjections.

Mr Rae: We're a little slow, Mr Speaker. We get there eventually.

I want to ask the minister this question: If he was right in December and we were wrong in December, as he said we were, why would he then have had his ministry bring forward amendments that are now part of the bill which indicate that the government's view was that the bill did in fact permit those kinds of sales taxes and gas taxes and that the government had to plug this loophole by bringing in these amendments? Why in that case wouldn't the minister join me today in submitting his resignation?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The members are out of order. There are no signs allowed in the House.

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I'm glad to see that the Premier did smarten up and decide to get out of politics. That's one thing that's helped.

The bill that was presented did not include the use of gas tax, sales tax or personal income tax. It did not then and it does not now. The fearmongering that went on with the opposition members with the general public, we determined that we would decide to make sure it was clear enough even for them to understand that we would put in a clarifying amendment. It doesn't add anything to the bill; it doesn't detract anything from the bill; it clarifies the bill.

1450

Mr Rae: I wish the minister well when he gets a call from Hazel McCallion after he's referred to her as a fearmonger. Good luck. It's not something I would've done.

I'm still unclear on one other subject which is related to this because we've had a series of, again, differing answers. That has to do with the question of toll roads imposed by municipalities or indeed other toll roads imposed by the province in addition to Highway 407.

Mr Hardeman, who's the parliamentary assistant, said, "If the intent or their ability was to actually impose it to the user of the road, the bill would allow that." That was in Hansard, January 22, and your Premier said, "Municipalities have the power to do it now, and they are or are not doing it." That was in a scrum, so I'm not—

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): Those are the options.

Mr Rae: I'd like to ask the minister, is it his legal view today, since we have no other opportunity to ask him this and we're being asked to pass this bill at the end of the sitting day today, that municipalities will be permitted, as a result of this legislation, to impose new tolls on local roads? Is that what we're going to be doing, what your government is going to be imposing at 6 o'clock today? Yes or no?

Hon Mr Leach: The bill does give wide-sweeping powers to municipalities to put in user fees on services that they provide. They provide road services, so if they chose to, in some communities in the construction of a new road, a toll might be appropriate. On many of the existing and our local roads I doubt very much whether the municipality will do that. Not everybody is opposed to tolls. My good friend from Oakwood recommended that there be a fee on cars used in Metro a few years ago. There are a number of people who would like to see tolls. So yes, if the type of road was appropriate, municipalities would be allowed to do it.

FAMILY SUPPORT PAYMENTS

Mr Trevor Pettit (Hamilton Mountain): My question is for the Attorney General. Over the last number of days I've received numerous calls in my Hamilton Mountain constituency office about the family support plan. As you know, there have been reports in the media that the government has made major policy decisions regarding the family support plan and that changes are imminent. My question for you, sir, is this: Is it true that these decisions have been made and are changes imminent?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I thank the member for Hamilton Mountain for the question. Mr Speaker, as you

are aware, all government programs at this particular time are being re-evaluated. That includes the family support plan. At the present time the family support plan has in arrears of enforcement \$900 million. That may be acceptable to the OPSEU union who like the status quo, but it's not acceptable to me.

I will be looking at many different opportunities and ways to reduce that outstanding amount of money and I will be looking at making changes to the family support plan. No decisions have been made at this time, but I am committed to reducing the outstanding arrears that women, primarily, and children are facing as a result of the status quo in this province.

Mr Pettit: Minister, it has been rumoured that your ministry will be issuing layoff notices on February 1 to family support plan staff and that you will be charging a \$2 user fee for accessing the program's telephone information service. Can you confirm these reports?

Hon Mr Harnick: I'd like to report to this House that there is no intention nor has there ever been an intention to charge a \$2 user fee for telephone services. Insofar as the closing of regional offices is concerned, no decisions have been made. I am rather surprised that the opposition is not interested in listening to this, seeing as a number of them, including Mr Cooke, have written me asking for an answer to this question. And this is the answer.

HIGHWAY TOLLS

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs. I'll follow up on the question that the leader of the third party asked you, and that has to do with toll roads. I just want to be very clear that you are saying to the people of Ontario that it is quite permissible for municipalities to implement toll roads. You are giving elsewhere in the legislation some broad powers to use electronic devices, to collect tolls on toll roads, to use new photo devices for toll roads.

I just want to be clear, to the Minister for Municipal Affairs, what you're telling the people of Ontario is that any municipality now may put a toll on any one of the roads within their municipality. Is that what we understand from what you said?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): The bill allows municipalities to charge for services that they provide. If they wanted to do that, there's absolutely nothing in the bill that gives them any wherewithal to collect it unless you wanted to do what the member from Oakwood suggested, and that's charge each driver a fee for having a car in Metropolitan Toronto. They could probably do that. But I don't think that our duly elected representatives in municipalities would do that.

Mr Phillips: Again, the problem is that the minister does not know what he's talking about. We had a hearing last week. I believed the minister was coming. We were told you were coming. You refused to come. You didn't have the courage or the guts to show up last week. But your parliamentary assistant said: "Yes, absolutely. This bill permits toll roads on municipal roads and it gives them the wherewithal to collect the money."

My question to you is this—it's very simple—do you not understand that in this bill toll roads are permitted and the mechanisms to collect those tolls are permitted? Why do you not understand the fundamentals in your own bill?

Hon Mr Leach: The bill doesn't give them the wherewithal to collect the money; it just doesn't. It gives them the ability to charge a fee, but there's no way. You also have to provide roads for their service. My understanding is that if they put up a toll road you wouldn't have to pay a toll if you didn't choose to, you wouldn't have to pay it.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): New question, third party.

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): We can certainly see why the Minister of Municipal Affairs didn't come before the committee again.

HEALTH SERVICES RESTRUCTURING COMMISSION

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): I have a question to the Minister of Health. One of the numbers of amendments proposed last week to your section of the legislation would have allowed that, for this dictatorial commission you've set up that will close hospitals from one end of this province to the other end of the province, it would at least make the commission somewhat more democratic by having regional representation on the commission, which is absolutely essential.

Can the minister now tell us why he refused to have amendments that would have regional representation, that would have representation from district health councils on the commission and would make the commission that has been given so much dictatorial power more democratic and representative of Ontario? Why did you refuse to support those minimal amendments?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): An amendment that certainly was accepted and brought forward by the government and the opposition was that the Health Services Restructuring Commission—again that we were asked to set up by the district health council in Metropolitan Toronto, suggested by them, endorsed by the Ontario Hospital Association—would have to have regard to the DHC studies, the local studies, so that the commission couldn't go off and exercise these powers and do its own thing but had to have regard.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Two hours of debate it took to get that amendment passed. You resisted it every step.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Would the member for Beaches-Woodbine come to order.

Hon Mr Wilson: I'd also remind the member for Windsor-Riverside that his government made sure that the district health councils have wide representation. In fact the quotas are still there as to what profession you come from and whether or not you're a consumer and a health care provider. Those district health councils represent their regions. The commission will act on those studies and those studies only, according to the amended act.

You've had your democracy; you've had the local say and you've had the regional representation. The commis-

sion will work with those district health councils to actually implement these studies, some of which have been studying this issue for about 10 years.

1500

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): Why doesn't the law say that?

Hon Mr Wilson: I think we have good input there and the law does reflect that.

Mr Cooke: It took two hours of debate in the committee to get your members to agree to one amendment that allowed for something that said the commission must have regard to the DHC reports, and then your parliamentary assistant said, "We'll accept that amendment because it doesn't mean anything." That's exactly what you said.

I think the language that you use shows absolutely where you're coming from, and I quote what you just said. You said something about, "You've had your democracy."

Mr Speaker, I don't believe this person should be in that particular position when he doesn't have any respect for the doctors of the province, the health councils of the province, the parliamentary process. How can you possibly sit there in your seat and justify a restructuring commission where you could take one person off that commission, send that person into a community that they don't even know, they don't come from, they'll have no sensitivity to, and that one person will assume all dictatorial powers over the health care system in that community and can impose a total change? How can you justify that in Ontario in 1996?

Hon Mr Wilson: Again, the act does ensure that district health councils must have regard to the local studies. That opens them up to traditional review if they don't have regard for those studies, so it's a very serious amendment in Bill 26.

Secondly, I have said from day one, and the terms of reference of the commission will reflect this, that we want the commission to have the flexibility to set up regional panels. But at the same time, the time for study is done. You sent these people back, in terms of the district health councils and the volunteers, many, many times to the drawing boards. Their studies are done. Mr Cooke, the one in your area is ready to be implemented. It needs the help of the commission. I have the quotes from your district health council, which clearly endorses this commission and says, "Let's get on with implementation."

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): What did they do in Sudbury to the DHC and their recommendations? Totally destroyed the local process.

Hon Mr Wilson: Ms Martel is yelling at me too. Sudbury is ready to implement. The commission will help facilitate those local studies. The government was asked to do this by the hospital providers themselves, and we are very confident that we will finally be able to get on with restructuring the hospital system, that it will be at arm's length from the government, take the politics out, and get these studies implemented in which volunteers have invested thousands of hours of time and which the government and taxpayers of Ontario have invested millions of dollars in studying. The time for study is over. There's wide consensus across the hospital com-

munity in this province that the time for study is over, and the commission will enable local communities to implement their local reports.

WORKFARE

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, people in my riding want welfare with work. Nobody ever got rich on welfare, and we cannot afford to merely toy with reform. Work for welfare was a major commitment made by the present government during the 1995 election campaign. Can you confirm that our government remains committed to implementing a work-for-welfare plan, and could you please inform us about the progress you have made towards developing such a plan?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Community and Social Services): Mr Speaker, I must say it's nice to be in a position to receive a question from one of our caucus members for a change.

First of all, let there be no misunderstanding that this government remains fully committed to introducing a mandatory workfare program this year. We outlined in the Common Sense Revolution during the election, and certainly we hold to that commitment, that Ontario Works, as set out in the Common Sense Revolution, will require able-bodied welfare recipients to work in exchange for their welfare benefits. Our work-for-welfare program planning is right on track and we have been looking at a number of options. We have looked at a number of different options from different jurisdictions, but the one thing we have realized, of course, is that Ontario requires made-in-Ontario solutions. We need to do this in order to get people back to work.

I want to take this opportunity as well to thank the committee of MPPs who have been working with me very industriously to implement, to provide the structure for workfare, and also look at the options for made-in-Ontario solutions to get people back to work.

Mr Barrett: The welfare system is a trap. It's not working. The caseload has skyrocketed in recent years as governments increased benefit rates year after year. The past two governments spent \$40 billion on welfare and did not help people to break free from welfare dependency. We need a plan that works.

Minister, what employment can we expect from this work-for-welfare plan, who will be required to work, and what partnerships are being developed by the government to ensure that adequate job placements are available?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Our basic philosophy right now is that our work-for-welfare program will help people break their dependency on welfare, break that cycle of dependency and get them back into a self-sufficiency mode again. We believe that people should take more responsibility for themselves and their families.

All able-bodied people will be required to work for their welfare payments. Certainly, as the question has been asked, we are going to exempt the disabled, we're going to exempt the seniors and parents with young families.

We've met with a number of organizations, including some service clubs, business organizations and commun-

ity groups, to get their input on various options available to us, and we will be looking for further community participation.

If throwing money at the problem was the solution, I don't believe there would be anybody on welfare today. That's why we need to change things. If spending \$40 billion on welfare over the last 10 years was not the solution, the idea must be to get people back to work.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

SAVINGS AND RESTRUCTURING ACT, 1995

LOI DE 1995 SUR LES ÉCONOMIES ET LA RESTRUCTURATION

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for third reading of Bill 26, An Act to achieve Fiscal Savings and to promote Economic Prosperity through Public Sector Restructuring, Streamlining and Efficiency and to implement other aspects of the Government's Economic Agenda / Projet de loi 26, Loi visant à réaliser des économies budgétaires et à favoriser la prospérité économique par la restructuration, la rationalisation et l'efficience du secteur public et visant à mettre en oeuvre d'autres aspects du programme économique du gouvernement.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member for Oriole has the floor.

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): As I said this morning, when Bill 26 is proclaimed, the powers of the Minister of Health will be absolute. He can unilaterally decide to close or amalgamate hospitals with just one month's notice. There's no requirement for consultation, nor is there a requirement for any community participation. There is no defined role for the district health council. In fact, no public process or hearing is assured.

What could be worse? Well, the minister will be able to delegate all of his power to an unaccountable, appointed restructuring commission. No public process is required before the restructuring commission or any one member of the commission may make decisions that will have a dramatic impact on communities. And they will all be free, the minister and the restructuring commission, from any court scrutiny or challenge.

Every presenter before the committee thought that the minister should be making the decisions. Every presentation, even those supporting aspects of Bill 26—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Could I have order in the House, please. Order.

Mrs Caplan: —said that the minister should not be able to delegate his powers. Did they listen? No. Is the minister listening? No. They slammed the door on over 900 Ontarians who wanted to be heard, and they refused reasonable requests to allow adequate time to discuss their own 160 amendments. The minister has refused to come to the committee to be accountable for their policies, and unfortunately they sent unprepared parliamentary assistants to carry the can.

The minister's power, which will permit micromanagement by the Ministry of Health, remains in this bill. Every presenter told the committee that the Ministry of

Health should not interfere with the management of health care by voluntary hospital boards. Vickie Kaminiski, president of the Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, spoke on behalf of many when she said, and I quote, "What we've got now is a Minister of Health micromanaging the entire health care system."

1510

Did they listen? No, they did not. Volunteer hospital boards are an important tradition in Ontario. Now the minister, through the appointment of a supervisor, can dictate the type of services and the level of services that a hospital may or may not provide. Although there is a four-year sunset clause on some of the minister's powers, the minister will always be able to send in a supervisor, and with just 14 days' notice he can take over the hospital: no process, no public hearings, no investigation, no reasons need to be given, no right to appeal. Madam Speaker, I have to tell you that in my over a decade here, I have never seen anything significant sunsetted. I agree with the Ontario Hospital Association that voluntary hospital governance is seriously undermined by this legislation.

One of the most frightening aspects of Bill 26 is the potential for the Americanization of health care. What do I mean by this? It means that the Ontario Ministry of Health can start behaving like a US insurance company. They will be able to contract with private sector US-style managed care companies. Is that really possible when Bill 26 becomes law? Yes, it is. Why does the cabinet want the authority to unilaterally decide which services are medically necessary? Does the cabinet really want those powers? Yes. They get them in Bill 26. Are they planning to tell you or your parents that you cannot have dialysis treatment or a transplant when you're over the age of 65? They do it in Britain. Do we want that in Ontario? No.

Why do they want to be able to collect and disclose information? When I told Jim Wilson that his policy threatened privacy, he stood in the House and he said I was wrong. Well, the privacy commissioner said that I was right and that Jim Wilson was wrong. And he's wrong about many other things. Some of my concerns have been addressed, but not all. The privacy commissioner does not have any authority and did not even comment on changes to the Public Hospitals Act. In Bill 26, medical records were not protected in the event of a hospital closing. What else has been overlooked? The privacy commissioner wants new health privacy legislation. He is right, and I hope we will see it soon. But the privacy commissioner, Mr Wright, has said very clearly that he is not satisfied with how Bill 26 changes access to information under the freedom of information legislation, and that's in this bill that's to be passed today.

Does this government plan to privatize OHIP? They could when this bill passes. How will the government use its new powers? Why have they removed the Canadian not-for-profit preference in the Independent Health Facilities Act? What will the changes to the Independent Health Facilities Act mean for both insured and uninsured services? What will the impact be on chiropractors, physiotherapy, podiatry and audiology? There are too

many unanswered questions. I beg you, do not pass this bill today.

What about the principle of natural justice? Why is there no right of appeal for people and companies and communities who feel they have been treated unfairly, and why the lack of community involvement? It is unprecedented in Canadian jurisprudence to legislate the reversal of a court decision. If you think the government has treated you unfairly and you win in court, you win. Not in Mike Harris's Ontario. If this government loses a court case, it can just bring in a bill like Bill 26 and overturn the court decision. That is unheard of and it is unfair and it is an affront to natural justice. Yes, this bill infringes on personal rights.

Doctors will have no right to a hearing or to an appeal to court for compensation when a hospital where they work or an independent health facility closes or the hospital service is discontinued. Nurses and other workers who are displaced by restructuring will lose their rights. I think this is fundamentally wrong.

Effectively, Bill 26 suspends democracy for the next four years. Just about everything and anything can be done by regulation. The unprecedented regulatory authority in this bill will allow all the decisions to be made behind closed doors. Where there is no community involvement, democracy suffers, and that is very bad for our health. When individuals feel helpless and hopeless they are unhealthier. Yes, there were a few—too few—opposition amendments accepted by the government. The government originally did not include the need to consider, for example, access to services as part of the minister's public interest considerations. But did we fix Bill 26? No, we did not.

This bill still can do tremendous damage. Mike Harris, in his Common Sense Revolution election promise, told you that you could have it all. He said: "I will not cut one cent from health care. There will be no new user fees. I will not hurt seniors and the disabled. I have no plans to close hospitals." He promised to protect health care with stable funding. That meant a flat line for hospital budgets. When he said, "I have no plans to close hospitals," I bet you thought that meant no hospitals would close. He said there would be cooperation with providers. He promised consultation with communities. He said he could balance the budget and cut income tax rates by an incredible 30%.

Make no mistake. Bill 26 is all about the 30% tax break, which will benefit the wealthiest in Ontario. That will cost the treasury \$14 million a day.

We didn't think Mike Harris meant no consultation, no negotiation, no cooperation, billing numbers for doctors, closed hospitals, hospital budget cuts by \$1.3 billion, user fees for drugs and on municipal services, and we were sure he didn't mean absolute ministerial powers, but that's what Bill 26 does. Mike Harris said he would resign if he didn't keep his promises. I say to this government, if you have any common sense, any integrity, then Bill 26 should not pass today.

To conclude, I would like everyone to know that unlike Jim Wilson, Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, I believe every word I have said. My integrity and my personal credibility are very important to me. I am saying the

same things today that I said when I was Minister of Health from 1987 until 1990. I believe that I was elected to help develop good laws and good public policy. I was appalled to hear Jim Wilson say that he was just posturing and didn't mean anything he said when he served in opposition. That is the statement of a politician who lacks integrity; that is the statement from a politician who does not understand public service.

The Premier said today that faith has diminished. Well, Jim Wilson's cynicism diminishes all of us, and it saddens me that he and too many of his Tory colleagues think that's okay. I am outraged, and it is not okay with me. It is not acceptable. This is not a stupid game. Bill 26 is a bad law and it has very serious consequences. But nothing in this place is carved in stone except the names of the former members in the wall, so please reconsider Bill 26. This is a sad day for Ontario. If this bill passes today, it will be a travesty.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak to this bill today. I had the opportunity, along with a few of my colleagues, to sit on one of the two parts of the committee that dealt with this bill, but I want to go back, even before commenting on the process that we went through in committee, to start with this bill at the beginning, which is the day it was introduced here in the Legislature.

I was one of the few members of the opposition present that day, and it just struck me from that very moment how underhanded this government was prepared to be in dealing with this legislation. We saw time after time, as action after action unfolded with respect to this bill from the government side, how that attitude continued to be dominant on the government side. I remember raising a point of order with the Speaker that day, but of course, according to the rules, they were able to introduce the legislation, which was their legislation implementing their budget or their economic statement, and they had the audacity to introduce it before the economic statement was read and when most opposition members weren't even present in the House.

1520

Of course, while it was technically in order, as the Speaker at the time ruled, we all know that it breached every tradition of this Parliament, every tradition of this Legislature, in introducing such massive legislation, first of all in the way that it was introduced, and secondly a piece of legislation that dramatically and in so draconian a way changes the basic rights of many citizens in this province and to do it in the kind of way that this government has done.

But then we've learned very clearly throughout this process that this government cares very little about the democratic process. They fundamentally believe that because they won the election on June 8, that gives them the right to do whatever they want, as quickly as they want and no matter what the fallout, no matter what the implication.

It was only after—and this is a point that we will continue to remind this government of—the opposition resorted to some measures unforeseen and never before seen in this House that we had the public given an opportunity to come before a committee and to give their

reaction to the bill. It was clear, as we heard in community after community in Toronto and throughout the rest of the province, that the concerns that people had and still have have not been addressed, have clearly not been addressed. If you look at what this bill does, any single measure in this bill ought to have been studied in the kind of way that the whole bill unfortunately was put to committee. Three weeks of public discussion, three weeks of public hearings; far, far less than necessary to be able to give the issues in this bill the kind of attention they need.

Let's take a look at just a couple of those issues.

This bill takes away the rights to pay equity for 100,000 of the lowest-paid women in this province. Throughout this whole process we have not had the decency given to us and given to the people of this province to have the minister responsible for pay equity, the Minister of Labour, ever appear before the committee. The only justification that we got from the government was that they were somehow bringing pay equity back to the way it was originally intended to be.

I always thought that pay equity was intended to rectify a historic injustice that has existed as it affects women in this province, and that is to bring, over a period of time, the pay for jobs that are predominantly carried out by women to the same level with jobs of comparable value performed by men. That's the point of pay equity and that's the point that this government is trashing. The rights of 100,000 of the lowest-paid women in this province are out the window with the passage of this bill.

We saw in another major area where the government, with no qualms, was just taking away the rights of citizens in this province—in this case, the people who work for the public service. We saw the spectacle just the other day of the Chair of Management Board confirming that there would be massive layoffs of public servants in this province over the next few months and over the next couple of years. He was quibbling about whether it was 27,000 or 20,000 or 15,000 or 13,000, as if somehow, if they only lay off 15,000 or 16,000 or 20,000, that's more justified than laying off 27,000 people. The reality is that laying off those individuals is going to mean fewer jobs and it's also going to mean fewer services.

But the insult that gets added to that injury is that as those people go out the door, to paraphrase one of the presenters, the government is going to pick their pockets of their pension rights, because those 20,000 or 27,000 people who are being laid off will not have the right to claim their pensions as they would under the existing law.

As has been pointed out in committee, throughout the hearings and in this Legislature, what the government is doing in taking away these pension rights is illegal. That has been the determination of the courts of this province. Through this legislation, this government is giving itself the power to override the courts.

That's the attitude that is symbolic of this government as we see it reflected in Bill 26. So they should not be surprised that on these issues, on many, many other issues, the people have understood and are understanding what you are doing. If nothing else was accomplished through these hearings, clearly people are more aware

today of the ideological bent that is driving this government, of the right-wing reform-minded agenda that is at the base of everything this government is doing.

We saw in the arbitration procedures things that have been described by many people appearing before the committee as "wage controls by the back door." What the government originally did in the legislation was to say that arbitrators have to consider certain criteria, including the employer's ability to pay, and they then even toughened that, through amendment, to say "without any resort to increases in property taxes or any other taxes."

What they also added to the bill through amendment—which I personally actually like, but I think it's going to cause some ambiguity and some problems—is a clause that says arbitrators don't have to even consider any of those points. So what they're going to try to do now is to say to municipalities, "We've toughened up the rules," and they're going to be saying to groups like the firefighters and the police associations: "Don't worry, we relaxed it. We haven't affected the arbitrator's jurisdiction." That's the kind of two-sided approach, that's the kind of speaking out of both sides of your mouth approach that we have seen from this government and that we are going to continue to see from this government, unfortunately.

We've talked, certainly, about the whole array of municipal taxation and municipal user fees—simply taxation with another name. Again not in my words but in the words of many presenters who appeared before the committee, a number of supportive of what the government is doing overall, said to us very clearly—chamber of commerce after chamber of commerce—that user fees are taxation. Several of them, if not most of them, said to us very clearly that there should not be any broadening of powers to municipalities to increase user fees. What are we seeing here? We're seeing, as confirmed even just earlier today by the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the broadening of powers to municipalities to charge user fees.

We saw also the ridiculous about-face that the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing was forced to make on one of the few concessions that we received on this bill—his having to backtrack on the question of taxation powers being given to the municipalities—where he stood in this House and he stood out there with the press, saying clearly that this bill, as originally drafted, did not give powers to municipalities to charge income tax, poll tax, gas taxes and sales taxes.

We then saw him in the embarrassing situation of having to come and bring amendments to the committee—actually not come, because he never did show up—and through the parliamentary assistants table amendments that clearly now say, as they should have said in the beginning, that these taxes are not allowed to be charged by municipalities, something that we know would have happened, again not because we are saying it, not because we are fearmongering, as the minister would have people understand, but because mayor after mayor, municipal leader after municipal leader said they were looking forward to these broader taxation powers. Only after the public outcry did the minister and the government relent on that point.

I think it's important that we say to people who have followed this debate throughout the hearings and here today that some changes were made to this bill, but it's equally important that people understand that this process is far from over. This government will pass this legislation today, I suspect. They have, after all, the majority; they have, after all, the right to make whatever laws they think are appropriate, however draconian those laws may be. They have that right, and as an opposition member I have to respect that right. But they should not be under any misapprehension that they are going to get away with what they are doing here today, because the understanding among the public of the province is much higher today than it was at the beginning of this bill and certainly than it was on June 9.

1530

What people are understanding now is the true face of the Harris government, a government that has been relentless in its approach to change the basic structure of this province, a government that has, piece by piece, begun to dismantle the very fabric of Ontario as we know it today, a government that said it wanted to give people who were on welfare a hand up and that it would not introduce the cuts to welfare until it had its workfare scheme in place.

We heard today the Minister of Community and Social Services continue to try to justify why they don't have at least the workfare scheme, as draconian as that is, in place. Yet one of the first actions this government took was to introduce a 22% cut to people on welfare, hitting those people who are the poorest in our society. That has been the way this government has operated. That has been its credo. That has been the approach it has taken. That is the approach that's perpetuated in Bill 26.

Why is all of this happening? It's happening because they believe fundamentally that the right they won on June 8 was to dismantle the province as we know it and to recreate it in their own form, and that form is one that takes power and resources and money away from all Ontarians and puts it into the hands of a few. What is driving their agenda above everything else is their ludicrous promise of a 30% tax cut. Again, speaker after speaker who came to the committee addressed that tax cut, and we had a chance to discuss it in many places throughout this province. People understand that 15% of Ontarians make over \$85,000 on average, yet that small group of people is going to reap over 40% of the benefits of the tax cut. Over \$2 billion is going to be shared in tax cuts by 15% of the population of this province. That's the approach of this Harris government.

The understanding out there is growing. The understanding out there is spreading. While the government will pass this legislation, it will also have to deal with that understanding out there. It will have to deal, as the committee members on the government side had to deal, with the embarrassment of having group after group that supported them during the election, groups like the police associations, groups like the firefighters, groups like the doctors, come before the committee and say things like, "We have been betrayed by Mike Harris and his government."

We had in one location, in Sudbury I believe it was, the pleasure of actually seeing Mike Harris on videotape as he made his promise to the firefighters, saying—

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): It was not a pleasure, Tony.

Mr Silipo: It was interesting, none the less. It may not have been a pleasure, my colleague corrects. But we saw Mike Harris very clearly state that he would not make any changes to affect firefighting services or the firefighters act and the firefighters in general without consultation. We heard in community after community throughout this province from firefighters saying: "Nobody talked to us, and we don't like what's in this bill. We don't like it because it affects our members negatively. More importantly, we don't like it because the user fee provisions that are in this bill will mean that public safety will be put in danger."

If you've got mayors running around saying they're going to slap user fees "on anything that moves" and they're going to put user fees on false alarms and user fees on cars that catch fire in their municipalities if the owners live in another municipality, firefighters said to us that that's going to mean people will try to put out their own fires and that's going to result in injury. People are going to disconnect their fire alarms and that's going to cause injury to people and to property.

That's the tenor of the concerns we had. Is this government doing anything to respond? No. We saw some modification in the health sections and we saw the backtracking that I commented on earlier with respect to municipal taxation. But the powers in this legislation, both vested in ministers and being given to municipalities, and the taking away of rights of people under pay equity, under the pension rights, in a number of other areas, are clearly part and parcel of the one agenda driving this government, which is to put the power into the hands of a few. That is what has continued to drive their agenda and that is what's going to continue, at the end of the day, to haunt them.

I say in concluding that this bill will pass, but let the government not for a minute think that this is the end of the road, because in many ways this is the beginning. We will see over the next number of months the effects of Bill 26 unfold, the effects of the government's economic agenda unfold. We will see that unfold in the courts in terms of challenges to this legislation—there are several areas where that's going to happen—but we will see it most, I fear, in the impact this is going to have on ordinary citizens across the province.

Unfortunately, it seems it is going to have to take that element of pain and suffering for members of this government to begin to realize that what they are doing is not only wrong but contradicts every basic tenet of justice we've had in this province and also contradicts the basic promise they put in front of the people of the province, which was that they would focus their activities on getting people back to work and would focus on bringing down the deficit, not on giving a tax cut to the rich.

Those are the issues that are going to come back to haunt this government. I know it's going to take some time, but we also know already the discomfort starting to be felt by members of the government side. We will be

patient, but in the meantime the public will continue to understand, will continue to see what is happening, and the day will come when people will have the chance to pass judgement on this government.

Mr Tony Clement (Brampton South): It is now the time allotted to me to speak to the motion and speak to the bill, and I welcome the opportunity. I want to start by recollecting that earlier this afternoon we heard the honourable leader of the third party impart to this chamber some wise words based on his years of experience in leadership roles. He quoted William Shakespeare, I believe from *All's Well That Ends Well*.

I'd like to bring to the attention of this House another quote from Shakespeare in which the immortal poet recalls "sound and fury, signifying nothing." I think it is somewhat apropos that I recollected that quotation from Shakespeare today, because there is a lot of sound and fury and I wonder in the back of my mind just how much it signifies: how much plays to the politics and the cameras and how much is heartfelt. But I will assume for the sake of argument—

Mrs Caplan: Point of order.

Mr Clement: —that the members do feel it in their hearts—

The Acting Chair: Will the member for Brampton South take his seat. The member for Oriole has a point of order.

Mrs Caplan: Thank you very much. I found the member insufferable on committee, but the rules of order do not allow him to impute motive, and I'd ask that you call him to order, Madam Speaker.

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): He was called to order once at the committee for exactly the same thing.

Mrs Caplan: Exactly right. We had enough of it at committee.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Before you continue, I have to tell the member for Oriole that I did not hear it. I would like to remind members that motives should not be imputed and people should not be provoked in that way. I didn't hear the member so I can't rule on this, but please be careful.

Mr Clement: I would remind the member for Oriole that once again she did not listen to me. We can check the Hansard, but if you had let me complete the sentence before you jumped in—

The Chair: Please address your remarks to the Chair.

Mr Clement: Thank you, Madam Speaker—the honourable member would have realized that in fact I was going to give them the benefit of the doubt and assume that they felt just we feel, that their vision of Ontario is the correct vision.

1540

I do regret that I must support Bill 26 today. I regret it because it is necessary for this province, after the 10 years of governance we have had, that such a bill is required for the benefit of the citizens of Ontario. It is with that regret that we as a government have been forced into the position of dealing with the current state of affairs in Ontario in a manner which some feel is uncalled for. We did hear presentations before the standing committee on general government, particularly

on the health care side, where people wanted to believe that the status quo, if I can term it that way, was still tenable.

Were it only true that that was possible, but the status quo has not been tenable for a number of years. In fact, the status quo has given us more and more hospital beds that have been retired from service. It has given us delisting of dozens—nay, hundreds—of drugs from the Ontario drug benefit plan. It has given us currently in the province a two-tier medical health system.

We heard a lot of presenters at committee worrying about a future two-tier medical system, yet we also heard at committee community after community after community, perhaps dozens of communities, who failed to have access to a single medical physician. When you have communities that have access to physicians and other communities that do not have access to physicians, that to me is a two-tier medical system. And that's what the status quo has been giving us.

So it is with regret that we find ourselves forced into passing such a piece of legislation, but we also heard at committee a genuine understanding from many of the presenters that real change was necessary. It must have been a shock to the member for Oriole, a former Health minister, to hear hospital after hospital, district health council after district health council, the Ontario Hospital Association, for gosh sakes, all recognizing that change was well overdue, that perhaps—nay, probably—this change should have started 10 years ago and that it was now time to complete the analysis, complete the plans and find a way to implement the decisions that had to be made so we could transfer resources from areas within the health care system where the money was not being spent well into areas where it was desperately, desperately needed.

We heard, and the member for Oriole knows full well that we all heard, from many areas at the standing committee where there was a genuine need for more resources—not just the same resources; for more resources. We heard from various AIDS committees and AIDS hospices, we heard from palliative care organizations, we heard from long-term-care organizations, the Canadian Mental Health Association and its representative branches, all of which have worthy demands to be placed upon our system; demands we could not meet unless we started to change the system, unless we started to recognize that moneys in the system right now were not being spent in the wisest way, not only for the taxpayer—yes, we're all taxpayers—not only for the citizens of Ontario, but for us as patients, because all of us at some point in our lives will have to have access to the health care system, perhaps as a patient.

This plan, as embodied in the bill, allows the hospitals, allows the district health councils, allows our communities to have the tools available to make the restructuring decisions that will allow us once again to reinvest those savings within the health care system.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): A chainsaw. This is a bill that destroys.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Welland-Thorold.

Mr Clement: An honourable member said earlier today that we are the enemies of the poor. But I ask you, who are the real enemies of the poor? The status quo gave us a doubling of expenditures and a tripling of our debt, yet we had fewer hospital beds, more people on welfare, more people using food banks, more unemployed, streets that were less safe and an education system that was starting to fray at the edges.

Mr Kormos: Show us the new jobs, Tony; 27,000 public sector jobs lost.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Welland-Thorold, you'll get your chance.

Mr Clement: So I say to those honourable members who really care about the poor and the needy in our society that the current system was not working for them, it wasn't working for the poor. And it most certainly was not working for the middle class, because it's the middle class, as we all know, that pays the bulk of the taxes in our society, that pays the bulk of the costs of governance. Yet they are being taxed and taxed and taxed, working harder and harder, and there was less coming back to them in terms of government services that were available to them and to their families.

Mr Kormos: Your corporate friends haven't. That's why you give tax breaks to the rich. That's shameful. It's obscene.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Welland-Thorold.

Mr Clement: So that is what the status quo was all about.

We also heard debate today about the growth rates as an economy that we project for the province of Ontario. I would put it to the leader of the third party, if he is listening, that there are many countries in the world which, when they are in a recession, have growth rates that we aspire to in a boom. There is nothing magical about attaining a 5%, either nominal or real, growth rate. It is doable. Many, many countries in the world do it every month of every year. The key is to have the structures in place that will allow the economy to grow at 8% or 12% a year, because it can be done and everyone in that society can have their piece of that growth rate, but you have to have the economic structures in place, and we most certainly do not have that now.

I ask the honourable members who talk so freely about despotism to think of the despotism that is created by an economy that does not work, of the authoritarianism that is created when there are no jobs and opportunity available in a jurisdiction. That, to me, is the real despotism and authoritarianism, that we are seeking to avoid with all of our strength.

Finally, I wish to talk about the process through which this bill has entered this chamber for third reading, because it was a process in which, as I think honourable members know, I participated, at least in some small way—three weeks of hearings in 12 communities throughout Ontario. I can only speak for myself, but I did listen very closely. I took the process very seriously, as I'm sure other honourable members did.

Mr Kormos: You wouldn't listen to the Niagara Region Police Association. You wouldn't listen to the seniors. You wouldn't listen to the aboriginals.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Welland-Thorold, come to order, please.

1550

Mr Clement: For me, the issue was, how can I achieve the goals of this government, which are worthy goals, the goals that I have just explained, and yet improve the bill? Because it doesn't matter whether you look at the bill for five days or 500 days—I've said this before—there are always ways to improve it. I, as a parliamentarian, did wish to take into account the views of those who came to our committee and the written submissions that were also filed, and constituents in Brampton South who telephoned me and persons outside of my riding who telephoned me to offer solutions and criticisms.

I took all of that process quite seriously. The fact of the matter is, I regret that we took some criticism as a government for taking that process seriously, for offering improvements to the legislation, and then were condemned by the opposition for offering those amendments in the first place. It does sadden me that our parliamentary debate had to come to that.

But I would offer for the record and to this chamber that the amendments we did put forward represented the views we heard, represented a way to ensure that the privacy of medical records was not only kept in the present form but in fact was improved. They were a recognition that there perhaps is a need for some privacy legislation, overarching privacy legislation in the medical records field. They represent as well an understanding that there were circumstances when prescriptions did require brand-name prescriptions rather than generic prescriptions at all times. The amendments recognized that, through a system of expedited review, doctors could be reviewed by their peers for what is medically or therapeutically necessary. There did not have to be a system of government inspectors to do so. They recognized all of those things and more.

I said this on the last day of the committee: If the price to be paid for improving the piece of legislation, for making it better, to get to where we have to get to as a society and yet do it in a way that recognizes some of the concerns that were expressed at the committee, if the price to be paid is that we do get criticized by the opposition, so be it. That is a price well worth paying for a piece of legislation that is better, for a piece of legislation that represents our dialogue with the people of Ontario, for a piece of legislation that will accomplish the goals necessary to bring us jobs and opportunity in Ontario, but in a way that does recognize that improvements in the way to get there were in fact possible.

So at the end of the day, this is a process about the passage of a bill and about advancing the government agenda. It does not end today. Indeed, I feel that the journey is just beginning. But I think that at the end of the day we can say that we have come one step closer to a government that works for the people of Ontario and to an economy that is able to produce the jobs and opportunity that this province so desperately needs.

Mr Cooke: I don't take any joy in the opportunity to speak about this bill today, because I do think that in the time that I've been around this place I have never seen a

process that is so faulty, I have never seen a process that is so antidemocratic. It gets the Conservatives upset, but this is undemocratic. It's dictatorial. It's Fascist. It's not a way of making good public policy. It blocks people out of the process, and it deliberately blocks people out of the process.

There have been many examples: The last piece of legislation that I can remember that had this level of importance—and it was very narrow in terms of whom it applied to—was in fact Bill 30, the bill that extended funding in the Catholic school system. There was an agreement from day one on that piece of legislation that there would be adequate time to debate the bill in the House and that when the bill went out for public hearings everybody and anybody who wanted to be heard would be heard, and the bill would not be passed, would not be reported out of committee until everybody had been heard.

This bill, I would argue, changes the province of Ontario much more fundamentally than that bill did. It changes health care, it changes our municipal system, brings in more new taxes in one piece of legislation than has ever occurred in the history of this province. This government said: "We are not going to listen to everybody. Enough is enough." As the Minister of Health said today, "You've had your democratic process." One can only assume that the second half of that statement would be: "Now we're going to assume our dictatorial powers. We're going to use them, we're going to apply them and people will see them applied from one end of this province to the other end of this province."

It really bothers me when I hear members like the previous speaker say that the economy in this province doesn't work, that Ontario's in such terrible shape that this kind of drastic action as included in Bill 26 is necessary because of the horrible conditions Ontario is now in. The fact of the matter is, we've got to keep it in some perspective. Canada is still ranked as being the best place to live in the entire world and Ontario is still the richest province in Canada. This is a great province. There is no need to bring in the kind of powers, the kind of changes that the government is now imposing without the kind of public consultation and involvement that I think is pretty fundamental to the democratic process.

We are not in a state of crisis in this province. Yes, there is a need for some change, and throughout the committee hearings members of the Liberal Party, members of the New Democratic Party said: "We're not advocating the status quo. We're prepared to, we want to look at change and mechanisms for change and the process for change, but we're not prepared to accept this bill in the way that this government brought it in and the way that this government refuses to listen to any of the criticism that was so prevalent at all of the hearings across the province."

There are a couple of areas of the bill that I want to touch on. The lack of respect for the democratic process is not just evident in the way that this bill was introduced and the fact that the only way there were any public hearings was by the most extraordinary action that has ever been taken in this place in order to force the government to listen and to accept public hearings, but the anti-

democratic flavour of this legislation is in the process as well as being in the bill itself.

There are a number of deals that were struck in this legislation. When we hear from the Treasurer, when we hear from the Premier, when we hear from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Minister of Health that they have given their partners the tools to deal with the reduced budget, what they are telling you is code language for a backroom deal that was struck on the municipal side with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, a deal that was struck without the workers being involved—all the people, the thousands and thousands of people who work for municipalities—without the taxpayers, without the elected politicians from across this province being involved. It was a deal that was struck that excluded people in this province and, in return, municipalities generally agreed that they would not be critical about the government's reduction in transfer payments of about 50%.

Now, I believe that this kind of backroom dealing by this government with the municipalities is not only undemocratic but it will change fundamentally the way the municipalities carry on business, the way local services are provided in this province. I do not believe that any provincial government or any municipal organization has the right to strike those kinds of deals without the involvement of the public. The public has a right to be involved. We do not have a right in this place to bring the ability for municipalities to introduce all sorts of new taxes which the government now wants to talk about as user fees. In the past they described a user fee as being a tax. We are now going to see user fees and new municipal taxes brought in from one end of this province for every conceivable service that is provided.

1600

There will be problems with access. The presentations that were made by library boards and workers in libraries were absolutely right when they said that low-income families would have more difficulty accessing libraries. Can you imagine in a province like Ontario where we would be saying, "If you use a library, you're going to have to pay for that use each and every time," when we know that access to reading materials, especially for young children, will determine their literacy skills when they get older? Literacy skills are fundamental to kids' ability to learn and, of course in the future, access jobs and professions. What the government has done—and that's just one example—is to have a very negative and unequal impact on the children of this province through the imposition of user fees across this province.

One other aside: When we did the grade 9 reading and writing test in Ontario, the first grade 9 reading and writing test a couple of years ago showed very clearly—and the research demonstrated this—that the kids in grade 9 who scored the highest scores were those who had access to reading materials and were read to at a young age. The more access they had, the more reading their parents did or teachers or the programs that are offered in libraries, the more access to those programs and to reading material, the better students did in reading. The better students did in reading, the better they performed, of course, in all the rest of their courses and course

material. This government is restricting access to reading materials on the basis of ability to pay, and I think that is criminal.

I also think it's important to talk about competence or incompetence by this government. Right down to today, the government knew all along that there was going to have to be a bill presented to the Legislature today, but here we are today, even though they've known this for a month and a half, and there were no arrangements made to have the final form of the bill printed and presented to the Legislature today. The most significant piece of legislation in the history of this province, with 160 amendments that the government pushed through last week, and the members of the Legislature don't even have the opportunity to look at the final form of the bill.

I'm quite frankly concerned that the lack of respect for the democratic process not only involves the bill, but also that the backbench Tories don't care. They didn't get access to the bill on the day it was introduced into the House. In fact, I had two Tory backbenchers come to my office and ask for copies of the bill on the day that it was introduced.

We take our job seriously. We expect that the government's going to provide us with copies of the bill, and we don't proceed unless the government provides us with those copies. You are just prepared to—"Mike Harris told us to do this and we're going to vote in favour of it"; hadn't seen the original copy that day and haven't seen the final copy today, but you will stand in your place this afternoon and you will vote in favour of the legislation that you haven't even read the final form of. You don't even know what amendments were put forward, and you're somehow going to say that that's a responsible way of making laws. Well, I think it's a terrible way of making public policy. It's undemocratic, it's uninformed and it's incompetent.

Let's also take a look at some of the other aspects of the bill, just a couple that I think have received significant coverage. I had to get a chuckle out of watching Mr Leach the other day on Focus Ontario, I believe, on Saturday night, where he—and again today—gave the explanation, "Look, I was right. The bill never provided for a sales tax, a gas tax or an income tax." "Well, then, why did you bring in amendments?" "Well, I brought in amendments because I want to make it clear." Clear what?

We had presentation after presentation from the deputy mayor in London, the representative from the city of Toronto council, the mayor of Mississauga, Hazel, and there were other presentations, all of them who said, "Yes, in our view and in the analysis by the lawyers who work for our municipality, we will have the right, if this bill is passed, to introduce a gas tax, a sales tax or an income tax."

Why don't you in the Tory caucus talk to your Minister of Municipal Affairs and say, "Why would it not be appropriate to simply say, 'We made a major mistake and we are correcting it; yes, in fact the way the bill was originally drafted, it would have provided for that'?" I guess it's because the minister was stupid enough, quite frankly, in a scrum to respond to one of the reporters in the gallery, who I think was in shock when he got the

answer from the minister, to start rhyming off individual taxes and say, "If in fact those taxes are provided for, I will resign." That is not either a sign of political smartness or of competence.

We also know that while the law may be clear that a sales tax, income tax and gas tax can't be introduced, there is provision for a head tax and there is provision for things like tolls. Bizarre today that the minister would say on one hand, "Yes, the law provides for toll roads," and then about five minutes later say, "But there's no provision in the law to collect those tolls." Why can't we get a clear answer? Does the government want tolls or that access to the revenue for the municipalities or doesn't it? If it does, then make it clear; if it doesn't, then make it clear. But let's stop playing this silly game of yes, it provides for tolls, but no, it doesn't allow it to be collected.

I believe, from reading the legislation, it provides for both, and what you're going to see in this community in particular, in Metro, is you're going to see tolls on the Don Valley, you're going to see tolls on the Queen Elizabeth Way, and you're going to see those put in very quickly. Then you're going to have, I think, negative impacts on transportation for goods and services to Toronto, that there'll be an additional cost of doing business—and those are the only ways to access Toronto—and you'll have a further loss of jobs in the private sector as a result of increased costs of transportation because toll roads will be provided for. But quite frankly, if Metro brings it in, I can't blame them for bringing it in because they've had transferred to them the Queen Elizabeth Highway, which requires at least \$50-million worth of repairs, and those repairs have not been funded by the provincial government so they're going to have to find the money somehow.

More fundamentally, though, is the whole question around health care. I was not on the health care side of the committee, but last week we went back together as one committee and we had an opportunity through the clause-by-clause debate, as far as it went, to discuss some of the health care aspects of the bill which I wasn't quite as familiar with. I could not believe last week when the parliamentary assistant confirmed that the restructuring commission that's going to be set up with eight to 10 members on the commission, number one, will not have representatives from the district health councils, will not have regional representation and the government would not allow any guidelines to be put in the legislation to direct the minister in some way, shape or form to make sure that the commission was representative of Ontario.

We now have a piece of legislation that's going to be passed at 6 o'clock tonight that will allow the government to set up a commission to restructure health care; not just hospitals, all of health care. You can take one member of that commission and that one-person commission can go into a community like Ottawa and make all of the decisions on how to restructure the health care system for that community.

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One person can do that, and all the power will be vested in that one person to act as an arbitrator to decide how that whole system's going to be restructured: close hospitals, close nursing homes, close homes for the aged,

close health care facilities under the Independent Health Facilities Act. That one person will be able to determine everything for that community with respect to its health care system, and they will not come from that community. It is bizarre, it is undemocratic, and I think that while the government may feel very proud of the fact that it's going to get its law passed this afternoon, it will face a political backlash from that process so that each and every one of the backbenchers in the Tory caucus will regret passing Bill 26 this afternoon. There will be a backlash.

The municipal side is just as bad. You will be able to restructure with a municipality, and it's all focused on county governments so you would be able to take a county government and convert it to a regional government without ever having to come back to the Legislature. You may feel very good that tonight you're going to have that power, but the reality is, when you start doing that in this province, there will be a backlash against your government and your members like you have never seen before and you will regret that you passed Bill 26 in the way that you have.

Mr Speaker, I could speak about this for a lot longer, but I will finish by saying that I'm disappointed, I'm frustrated, and I think the people of this province are angry at the powers this government is assuming in this piece of legislation. It is absolutely not only undemocratic but it is a great disappointment that this government would bring in a piece of legislation like this. It's something that I do believe you will regret, but I believe it gives you the kinds of powers that will be exercised, unfortunately, that will change this province, not in a positive way at all; change this province towards the direction that American states and municipalities have implemented, and to their American health care system, in a way that is very negative. People will come to understand that very quickly. So it's frustration, it's disappointment, it's a very sad day in this province as this bill gets final approval.

Mrs Janet Ecker (Durham West): I rise today as a member of the government committee that heard the public hearings on Bill 26 on the health portion, and I rise today to speak in support of Bill 26, as amended, as it has been reported to the House today. I think it's important to recognize that this bill has been changed in significant ways, and I think it's important to recognize that because those changes have been things that were responses to the people who came before the hearings, who brought forward their concerns to us. We responded to those concerns, the ones that we heard during the public hearing process, and frankly we also tried to respond to some of the concerns that were raised by the opposition critics.

But we responded to those concerns in ways that also preserved the legitimate objectives of Bill 26, because we have overall objectives that this government must achieve. They're objectives that we were elected to achieve, and in the health care system it was to restructure that health care system so that we can maintain the services that we all value and maintain the services that, as individuals and as families, we will all need.

We also must, as part of that restructuring exercise, find the savings within the system so that we can take from areas that don't have as high a need and reinvest in areas that have higher needs and higher priorities. Those are the objectives that Bill 26 is going to help us achieve. It's worth mentioning those objectives because in all the uproar, in all the hullabaloo that we have heard through the hearings and around the hearings, I think those objectives have been obscured.

We heard during the public hearings from communities that very, very articulately put forward the concerns they had about the health care system in their area. Many were underfunded, many didn't have programs that they needed. Many needed extra facilities or expansions of facilities. Many communities didn't even have a physician to serve their needs.

We also heard from doctors and nurses in the system who talked again very eloquently about the day-to-day challenges they face as they try to act as advocates on behalf of their patients.

We also heard from the volunteers in the system who have worked very hard to help both in the planning and the delivery of the system, who are prepared to continue to work very hard in the system as long as they know that their efforts are going to be recognized and respected.

Their message unanimously was that the health care system was in trouble, that the status quo was not working, and that, if left unchanged, our system will continue to deteriorate. This is not a new message. It's something that previous governments have been grappling with. Previous governments have had successes in their ways in certain areas as they've tried to answer and respond to that challenge. It's a message that our government has heard as well, and that's why we are making the changes that we are today, making the changes in Bill 26 that will assist the ministry and our transfer partners to get on with that job.

It's interesting that the opposition at first said we didn't consult with anyone; now they're trying to say that we made deals with organizations. I wish they'd get it straight. People in the health care system know that we have problems, and they are prepared to make the tough decisions to save our system in tough financial times.

I think it's interesting to take a look at some of the changes that we will be able to get on with with Bill 26.

We're going to have an improved ability to share information within the system about what is happening in the system: what treatments are working, what treatments are being done in what facilities, being done where—all that information that allows us to do quality improvement, to take a look at what treatments work and what treatments don't work. We've all heard about the good work of institutes like the Institute for Clinical Evaluative Sciences, ICES. We all know of the good work that many physicians' groups and organizations are doing to come up with better clinical outcomes to make sure that the treatments they are providing are the most effective treatments for their patients. The only way we can carry on that work is to have information-sharing within the system. Bill 26 will allow us to do that.

It will also allow us to improve our ability to deal with misuse and abuse in the system by both providers and consumers. I think we recognize, and this government has certainly said many times, that both consumers and providers have misused the system. It's interesting to note that in a recent poll, 70% of physicians said they believed that some of their colleagues were overusing the system, bringing patients back when they didn't need to. Something like 67% of the public agreed. It's also interesting to note that our government records, the OHIP records, indicate that in one month alone, 7,000 individuals saw five or more family physicians—just in one month. I think most people would agree that is an overuse of the system that we cannot afford to support any more.

We heard from consumers at the hearings who said: "Get on with better tracking. Get on with smart card technology, or whatever the best technology would be, so that we can stop that kind of misuse in the system." We are going to be able to do that with the tools we have in Bill 26.

I think it's also important to note that we will be doing that without violating the most important, fundamental principle in the system: the confidentiality of patient records. As I said, it's a fundamental principle in the system. There were many checks and balances which made sure that principle was protected. We believe that through the changes we have brought in working with the freedom of information commissioner, we have improved the legislation to make sure that those checks and balances are strengthened, that that confidentiality principle has been preserved. We've also made, I believe, a very important commitment as a government to bring in health confidentiality legislation. It's something that's been attempted by many previous governments, and for many reasons not been able to be achieved. We hope our government, with the help of and working with the commissioner, is going to be able to achieve such an important objective for our health care system.

We're also going to be able to improve quality in the system in another fashion by extending the Independent Health Facilities Act, legislation which was unique in its day when it was brought in by a previous Liberal administration. It's about quality and how to work in teams of health care professionals within facilities. The difficulty has been that as health care has expanded into other kinds of facilities, the legislation has been limited. It has not been able to extend those very important quality objectives for these other facilities.

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We are going to be able to do that with the Independent Health Facilities Act as amended by Bill 26. It's going to allow us to bring more facilities under this quality control provision, so that regardless of ownership, regardless of the services delivered, there will be quality control that I think will serve both providers and consumers much better than currently exists.

The other issue that we are going to be able to address is the issue of the supply and distribution of physicians. One of the things, as I mentioned, that we heard very clearly was from many communities which came forward to talk about how they had worked very hard, how the OMA, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the

Ministry of Health under previous governments, how individual communities and individual physicians had worked very hard to try to bring physicians to communities in outlying areas. And these days, "outlying areas" is getting to be more and more hard to define, when communities like Lindsay, when communities like Ajax, where I come from, which is within spitting distance of downtown Toronto, are having difficulties attracting the physicians they need in certain specialties.

They've all worked very hard, but to no avail. The Minister of Health, Mr Wilson, recognizes that it is a multifaceted problem, that there are many reasons why this is occurring. That's why he has brought in a multifaceted response that talks about educational support for physicians, that talks about technological support for physicians, that talks about the need to have people who will come in, other physicians who will spell off a doctor in a community, that talks about incentives; for example, the recommendation from the Graham Scott report that we would provide \$70 an hour for emergency room physicians to try and help in outlying communities.

All of those things the Minister of Health wants to do. On all of those things he wants to work with the OMA and with physicians' organizations to assist communities to obtain physicians. But ultimately, at the end of all that, if it does not work, this government was elected to act, and we must be prepared and we must have the tools to make sure that those communities have the physicians they need. We are prepared to do that, because they do deserve medical care.

I'd like to close with a word about volunteerism in our health care system. I mentioned it briefly before. I've been a volunteer in the system. I've helped in our area in health care. I know how much of our system depends on those efforts, both in the planning that is done through local communities or district health councils and also the actual provision of services themselves, how much of those services are provided by volunteers in the system. The system depends on them. It's important that this volunteerism is maintained in the system, and our government recognizes that. In other provinces, they simply wiped out hospital boards. We chose not to do that because we believe their work is important. We've chosen to maintain district health councils' roles because that is one of the important building blocks of the system.

Is Bill 26 perfect legislation? No, it's certainly not. Is Bill 26, as it has been reported to the House today, better, improved legislation? I believe that yes, it is, most definitely, and the public hearings that we had—

Mrs Caplan: Is it fundamentally flawed? Yes, it is. Should it be withdrawn? Yes, it should.

Mrs Ecker: —the input from two former Health ministers, the input from many of the organizations which came before us have helped us to improve this legislation.

Mrs Caplan: They were not consulted. Nobody was consulted.

Mrs Ecker: The member for Oriole likes to interject frequently, and she can continue to do so, but Bill 26, I believe, is necessary legislation. It's an important tool for this government and our transfer partners. It's most definitely needed, and I would urge this House to get on

with the job because our health care system cannot afford to wait.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I'm not pleased to have the opportunity to speak on this bill this afternoon because I had hoped that it would not be necessary to do so. I had hoped that the government, by now, would have come to the logical conclusion that what it should have done, what it should be doing this afternoon, is separating this bill into a number of individual bills for very careful consideration and further input from the public and further amendments from members of this House. Then indeed it would be improved legislation, as opposed to the minor amendments that we've seen, 160 in all, that have been emanating from the government benches.

I believe the government today has made a big mistake. They have done almost irreparable damage to themselves by this early in the term bringing in a massive bill of this kind which throws together so many different aspects of the government's mandate that it is extremely difficult for the public or members of this House to deal with it adequately. This, instead of being a day to be cheering the Harris administration, the Progressive Conservative administration in Ontario, I think will be seen, even by some of those who supported the government in the last election, as a day of shame rather than a day of celebration for the Conservative government in Ontario. I think if we look back—and members will recall this—at how this bill was introduced, we'll understand why that is the case.

A government that is proud of its legislation has a minister rise in the House, introduce a bill with some fanfare, perhaps a press conference later on in the day, and does it when all members of the House are present so there can be an appropriate response. This bill was part of a sneak attack by the government. With most of the members of the Legislative Assembly in the lockup for budgetary purposes, with most of the news media, almost all of the news media, over there, the minister responsible for being the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet rose in the House and introduced a bill, along with its compendiums, the size of which was too great for anybody to carry in one particular ride through the House.

This omnibus bill, which the government was not proud of, quite obviously, which it did not introduce earlier in the session so there could be adequate discussion and adequate analysis of the bill, affects some 47 acts of the Ontario Legislature and has so many components that have nothing to do with another component in the bill that I think any objective, fairminded individual in this province would conclude that the government was simply trying to throw everything it could into one bill and have only one debate so there would not be the kind of analysis and discussion that improves legislation or that subjects it to the kind of scrutiny that is good for our democratic process.

If the government were to have done that, if the government were to have separated this into several bills, and if it had done so earlier in the session, there would still be criticism, but I think what you would find was more public acceptance of it, and I think you would find

a piece of legislation that would be better for the province than that which we have.

The government obviously wanted just a few days of debate in this Legislature on a major piece of legislation, a massive budget bill, and really wanted no hearings, until such time as we had discussions between the House leaders to determine what kind of scrutiny the bill would have. The government proposed some hearings to be held before Christmas. While most people were out doing their holiday shopping, the government would have the House sit or a committee sit till 12 o'clock at night. We all know that would not be meaningful input. That's why those of us in the opposition called for the government to take a step back, to have hearings across the province in as many municipalities as possible, and to have them in January of the year, when people could look carefully at the bill and its impact on various segments of our society.

It required, unfortunately, for what is called the bully bill, an extraordinary parliamentary tactic on the part of the opposition, one that is not entered into with enthusiasm or easily, to be able to extract from this government a commitment that it would have these hearings, that we would have clause-by-clause discussion and ultimately a final debate in this House.

The bill, as many would recognize, is better than it would have been if it had been rammed through before Christmas, as the government had wished, but it is still a bill that is fatally flawed in terms of its impact on this province.

The right thing to do has been described by my leader and by others, and the government has decided not to do the right thing with this bill. Any bill which has the government itself propose 160 amendments to it—a bill, remember, that they wanted to have through before Christmas; a bill that they said didn't require amendments at the time. The government itself has introduced some 160 amendments, and members of the opposition many more than that, which were rejected by the government.

1630

Let's look at why Bill 26 is being introduced and why it's being passed by this government. It's really to allow the government to implement its infamous tax cut. The depths of the cuts to the public service—when you see children now having to pay sums to go into the library, when you see the government about to impose user fees on those who wish to use kindergartens, when you see all of the things this government wishes to do in terms of cutting back on publicly financed services, you know that it is to finance the tax cut, a tax cut, by the way, which will benefit the most wealthy in our society much more than it will people in the lower-income categories.

So the government is cutting the most progressive tax in the province, the income tax, the one that takes into account a person's ability to pay, and replacing it in effect with the most regressive of taxes, those being direct user fees within municipalities and property taxes, neither of which take into account an individual's ability to pay and both of which weigh heavily in favour of the most privileged and rich in our society.

What it does as well is it provides the government with an opportunity to get the credit for a tax cut, while municipalities and local transfer agencies, libraries, transit

commissions and various other organizations which receive government funding will receive the criticism for the cutback in services which so many in our communities believe to be of great use and essential to people residing in those communities.

For those who are small-c conservatives, let's look at what is going to have to happen so that this tax cut is delivered. This is an argument that's rather interesting. You talk about cuts, and a lot of the right-wingers, those on the extreme right wing, will nod acquiescently and say, "Yes, we need those cuts, no matter how deep those cuts are, no matter what the impacts are on individuals in our society." Whether it means that kids won't be able to play hockey because they can't afford to pay the cost of that when they raise user fees for the rinks and the rich kids will be able to play, whether that happens or not, that's not what they're looking at. They're prepared to accept that.

However, when you explain to them that the government of Ontario, because of that lost revenue, will have to borrow \$20 billion more and pay \$5 billion in interest costs to finance this tax cut, that makes no sense to even the most small-c conservative of economists in this province and elsewhere. That's exactly what is going to have to happen, exactly: a new borrowing. It is stated that the problem is the deficit. That's what the members of the government would tell us. Yet, the government is going to borrow \$20 billion more to finance a tax cut for those who are the most wealthy in this province, at least benefiting those the most.

Bill 26 is also designed to do something else, something very fundamental for this province and something that should concern each and every one of the elected members in this assembly and the people across this province. It is designed to take power and responsibility from the individually elected members of this Legislature and concentrate that power in the hands largely of unelected people, those people being the whiz kids who always populate the offices of the Premier and ministers, the political advisers—who are often paid more money, by the way, I should say, than members of the Legislative Assembly.

The political advisers and the senior bureaucracy will have more power as a result of Bill 26, far more power than they could ever have contemplated, when this bill passes. The only people who the people of this province can get at, can influence, those who are the elected members, those of us who must go to the polls at election time, will have diminished power. So ultimately the people of this province have less power, less access to influencing government, because that power is now concentrated in the hands of the geniuses who would have it—premiers' offices and ministers' offices—over the years.

The backroom boys, then, will be pleased with this bill. They will be smiling now, I assure you. I guess what is saddest to see in this Legislature is watching the elected members simply relegate themselves to the position of ribbon cutters and cheerleaders for the cabinet.

I've listened to every political party talk about how we can enhance the role of the individually elected member.

There's always going to be more independence, more input and more power given to those elected locally, the individual members of the Legislature. Then, when a government gets in power, you find out that it's concentrated in the hands of a few in the cabinet and, as I say, the powerful political advisers to the Premier and the senior bureaucracy who also carry a lot of influence with any government.

What the members of the government are doing by allowing this bill to pass, by enthusiastically embracing it, by defending it across the province, in other words by believing their own propaganda and purveying that propaganda across the province, is they're diminishing their own power and responsibility and turning it over to the wise guys who always know better than elected members about how this province should run.

Many of those are people who are wedded to the philosophy south of the border, the Newt Gingrich philosophy, the Republican Party philosophy, and I'm not talking about the moderates within the Republican Party but rather the extreme right-wingers within the Republican Party. Simply look at what goes on south of the border. You're seeing it transferred to this side of the border.

I think the government has made a major mistake this afternoon by passing this bill. The elected government members, the backbenchers and others not in the cabinet, have made a mistake by not putting the kind of pressure needed on the Premier and others to withdraw this bill, to make substantial changes to it so that democracy is the victor.

The battle over this bill has just begun. I know the government thinks and I know that the people who wanted this bill in the first place, the unelected people who advise the Premier and advise the ministers and the senior bureaucrats, certainly believe that the battle is over, that they now have the levers of power, that now they can implement whatever they wish with minimum scrutiny in this Legislature and with minimum influence by individual members from all parties.

But I assure you, as the ramifications of this bill are evident to the people in terms of closing the hospitals, of imposing user fees—of imposing user fees in the field of health care, in all of the things which have been described in this bill, all the possibilities—the abandoned mine sites and the fact that they are going to be subjected to much less environmental scrutiny, all the ramifications which have been described by all members of this House will start to come forward and become evident to the people of this province. Then the government will understand why I say today that you have made a big mistake and one from which you will not easily recover.

1640

Mr Bart Maves (Niagara Falls): I rise today, for the first time that I have actually been able to, to speak to Bill 26. As Vice-Chairman of the standing committee on general government I served as Chair of the non-health-side committee and I was proud to serve with many people in this House on that committee: Mr Cooke, Mr Silipo, Mr Phillips, Mr Gerretsen, Mr Sampson, Mr Tascona, Mr Young, Mr Hardeman, several members. It was a good committee and I was proud to sit with them

for hundreds of hours of committee time, more time than any bill, as I understand it, that has been looked at in this Legislature over the last 10 years—nothing to shake a stick at.

I will say, though, that although I was very proud to serve with the committee, I did have some things that I heard today and some things that, when said on the road, I couldn't leave being unsaid or unresponded to on my part—not only the 300 hours of committee time that we had on this bill but the 360 hours which were offered but refused. This is something that we mentioned time and time again when the idea came up of how much further time should be added to this process, and I thought it should be reiterated here today.

A big bill? Yes, it was. An omnibus bill, it's been called, but how big was it? Well, 211 pages is the number of pages in the bill. It was always put forward, "How does someone deal with 211 pages?" They didn't have to, really. They had to deal with 105 in English and 105 in French—105½ each, I guess—but substantially smaller, half of the 211 put forward.

The committees were divided into health and non-health, and on the health side there were 35 pages of the bill. Schedules A through E were generally amenable to all parties. In fact, they didn't get talked about very much at all. They encompassed about 25 pages of legislation, so we were left with about 45 pages to deal with—not nearly as big and ominous as some would have you believe.

Earlier today the member for Scarborough-Agincourt gave a little bit of a lecture to some of our members about process and competence. Actually, his words were "being straight with people." I would say to him he should take some of his own advice.

He told a story on the road of how we used to have debates every morning about amendments, "Where are the amendments?" and Mr Sampson, the member for Mississauga West, would say: "We're listening to the people in Toronto, we're listening in western Ontario and southern Ontario. Now we're listening in northern Ontario. We've heard some people, we're working on some amendments, but they're not quite ready yet. We want to hear more people and make sure we've got things right."

On that Wednesday, the last Wednesday before we finished our hearings on the road, on the health side of committee in Kitchener they had decided they were ready to table some amendments, and they were tabled. Today the member for Scarborough-Agincourt put that forward as if our member for Mississauga West had the wool pulled over his eyes or didn't know what was happening. Well, I assure you he did. He knew, because his amendments were not ready to be tabled and so they weren't tabled that day. He is an excellent and competent person.

The point is, Mr Phillips should have been straight with the people, that he knew that those weren't non-health committee amendments; that they were health committee amendments.

Something else happened over and over again in the committee. The compendium, a 2,000-page addition to a bill which generally goes only to opposition critics, was referred to quite frequently. The member for Scar-

borough-Agincourt pointed out that it had the words "generally unlimited flexibility" when it talked about fees and licensing.

He tried to nail down the minister when the minister did appear before this committee on first day of hearings and he said, "Is there unlimited flexibility?" The minister clarified and said, "Well, there's as much as possible, but there will be limits where need be." He did put limitations on this idea of unlimited flexibility, yet every time someone came before us the member for Scarborough-Agincourt would say, "Mr Leach says there's unlimited flexibility." He didn't say that. He qualified it. The point again is being straight with the people. I think it should be pointed out.

Poor Mayor McCallion. I don't know how many times I heard people say that Mayor McCallion was going to be a tax-crazy fiend, ready to put gas taxes on and so on and so forth. Well, she didn't say that. She said she thought perhaps there was a possibility that could happen. How did she respond when she was asked: "How will you handle, Mayor McCallion, the cuts over the next two years to your municipality?" Here's what she said: "We will not do it by user fees or raising taxes. We will find the efficiencies to cope." That was never read back into the record. I think the point here is, let's be straight with people. That's what she said; not, "I'm going to go crazy with gas taxes."

Some people refused to allow members to put words in their mouths. Mr Reid from the Ontario Mining Association was in one day, and again the member for Scarborough-Agincourt said: "I think if your industry looked at all other components of the bill you'd say that, on balance, as an Ontarian, 'We have real problems with the bill.'" Mr Reid refused to have words put in his mouth and said, "I'm not going to let you put words in my mouth, Mr Phillips." Again, the point is about being straight with people.

Mr Phillips is a humorous gentleman whom I enjoy very much and I enjoyed being on the road with him. When we were back doing clause-by-clause analysis, at one point he looked up at the TV monitor where we were on and said, "That TV should have a warning on it when people tune in to that." I said: "Yeah, I agree. After clause-by-clause, I think that warning should read: 'Do not adjust your set. You may be hearing the same things over and over, but we are actually live.'"

The reason I say this is, even though the time that we had was so precious to the members opposite and so little, they still had time every day to get up and debate motions that they knew were not going to win approval. They didn't want to debate the amendments, they just wanted to put forward motions.

Interjection.

Mr Maves: I don't want to impute motives, sir, but it was a day and a half before we got to schedule A. Any member of the public who was watching on TV must have been shocked and dismayed that it took a day and a half before we even got to look at schedule A.

If time was so precious, I wonder why on Thursday, at 5:20, we started to debate a government motion and we debated it. We heard arguments against that motion for 40 minutes from the members opposite—40 minutes.

With two minutes left in the day's events, they voted unanimously in favour of that government motion. Lo and behold, I turned the page. The next motion was an NDP motion and it was identical, word for word, to the one that they just argued against for 40 minutes. If time was so precious, then why did we spend 40 minutes debating a motion that they were ready to put forward themselves?

Finally, let me say that I have great respect for many of the members across the aisle, and I found it very disconcerting that one day, strangely, we were surrounded by four camera crews and all of a sudden, three very veteran members of this House jumped up and unfurled a banner. All three know very well that banners and demonstrations of that sort are not in order in the Legislature or in committee. They unfurled their banner, they got their TV shot and then exclaimed, "I didn't know it was out of order." That type of waste of time we couldn't afford in considering this bill, because time was precious. We did need time to do clause-by-clause, and I hope in the future they keep that in mind.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): It has been an interesting couple of months, let me say that, from the spectacle of seeing a government introduce a bill in the Legislature while opposition members were locked up in the pre-budget lockup to a series of discussions between House leaders which started with the government saying, "No time for committees."

We hear much from the members opposite about how they offered more committee time than we actually ended up with. They always conveniently forget to mention that in fact it was the government House leader's position that there would be no time for public hearings, no hearings at all on Bill 26, that their government wanted this just done, rammed through and passed by December 14, when the Legislature would rise.

The reaction of the opposition, the reaction of the public, the media attention given to that caused a repositioning on the other side, and then we had scurrying around, offer after offer, and it was all, you know, this was going to be the big offer. Yet we just heard Mr Maves say, "We offered 390 hours compared to the 360 you got," or whatever those numbers were. There are very few things that get me really angry, but you know what does? When people mislead the public and members of the Legislature by making such comments; I mean, you can poke a hole in that 100 ways through.

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Let's just back up a moment and look at what they offered, because I think it's important that people know when they hear the government go out and say: "Gee, we really wanted to listen to the public. Gee, we really wanted to have public input. Gee, we offered more hours in public hearings than what the opposition finally agreed to."

They offered a week's hearings split into three different rooms. Yes, it split the bill up and that's where they get the number of hours from. One week's hearings starting early in the morning, going late at night, before December 14, at a point in time when the bill wasn't even available in the government bookstore for members of the public to buy it, to be able to read it, to be able to

develop a position to come forward and inform the government of what their position would be. Is this what they call informed debate, informed public participation? It was a sham, a true sham.

It took incredible efforts, unprecedented initiatives on the part of the opposition, to force the government House leader to provide a process that had some public hearings in January when people would have a little bit more time to have read the bill and understand it and be able to come forward and participate in informed discussion about the bill, and to travel the province, because otherwise it would have all been here in Toronto, and to have a period of clause-by-clause.

Let's look at what happened once we got into January. In the two weeks of travel on the road there were under 300 hearing spots available, and people may be interested in knowing that there was a genuine public response, that people wanted to participate. Do you know how many? Over 1,000 groups and individuals applied for less than 300 spaces, to be heard before the two committees as they travelled. This is what you're calling adequate public consultation? We heard from enough people?

In fact, I think the Premier said today, "We heard from the genuine people." Well, what were the others? Who were the ungenuine people? Are those the vested interests you keep writing off that you don't have to listen to? Anyone who has an opinion that opposes yours in any way, all of a sudden is a vested interest and doesn't need to be listened to? That's not how you govern. That's not how you build consensus in society. That's not how you get the best laws. Even going in the direction you want to go, you need to listen to people, to be informed, to understand how your bill is going to affect different constituencies and regions and groups of people. You never gave the time for that.

So we had the two weeks of public hearings, and I'm glad we had that. I'm glad that there was some opportunity in January for us to travel the province and to hear from people. I'm sorry that there were hundreds and hundreds of people who weren't heard. I've got 26 pages here to show people, lists and lists and lists of names, groups and individuals who didn't have the opportunity to appear before the committee, who were denied the opportunity.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Maybe they were not genuine.

Ms Lankin: Yes, my colleague here says, "I guess these people are not genuine people." We'll have to write them and let them know the Premier thinks they're not genuine.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): Tell us about the comparison with your omnibus bill.

Ms Lankin: I'm sorry. I'm going to digress for a moment because there's a member behind me here who is now piping up with the other big Tory myth: the comparison between this omnibus bill and Bill 175. We heard it again today from the Premier. Let's talk about the big lie here. Let's talk about the myth.

Bill 175 was an omnibus bill that had primarily housekeeping changes to legislation, which was circulated in draft form to the opposition parties. The opposition parties were able to indicate if there were areas they

thought were controversial. In fact, there were some areas they pointed out that were more than housekeeping changes, that were substantive, that they found controversial and asked for them to be taken out. They were taken out.

Then the three parties sat down and talked about how they would deal with this and what kind of House time would be required, because the opposition parties had other bills that they were interested in and wanted to debate. They said: "We don't need any committee time and we don't need any debate time. These are all minor housekeeping legal changes in here. They're not content changes. We don't want to talk about it."

This is your big comparison to defend your actions on Bill 26?

Mr Bisson: A pretty weak argument.

Ms Lankin: Not only is it a weak argument, it is completely misrepresenting history. It's revisionism; yet again revisionism. But much about this bill is revisionism. Let's look back to the campaign and to the Tories' Common Sense Revolution and their commitments to the public of Ontario. What did they say?

Number one, they said, "No cuts to health care." And what have we seen: \$1.3 billion in cuts to hospitals in this province that are going to dramatically reshape the delivery of health care services; no absolute commitment for a reinvestment of those dollars until five years down the road, when we're ready to go back to the public. Then we'll restore the budget, after all the changes have happened, after we've put in the user fees.

Wait a minute. There's another promise, "No new user fees in health care." And what does this bill do? It brings in copayments, which are user fees, which are taxes, as the Premier would say. A fee hike by any other name is a copayment is a user fee is a tax. It brings in a tax on seniors, and particularly on sick seniors who require necessary medication in order to maintain their health, perhaps to stay in the community and out of institutions.

What did you tell them when you went through the campaign? You knocked on doors and you said, "No new user fees." I know the seniors in my riding believed you meant no copayments on the drug plan. But you're saying now, "No, what we meant was no new user fees on medically necessary services covered under the Canada Health Act." Was that too long for your campaign literature that you couldn't write it in if that's what you meant? And the absurdity of it, because if you did introduce a user fee on a medically necessary service under the Canada Health Act, it would be clawed back immediately by the federal government. It would be a violation of the Canada Health Act.

So what were you doing, going out there promising that you were just not going to break the law? Of course not. You said, "No cuts to health care." You said, "No new user fees." You said you were going to ensure that municipalities didn't raise new taxes. And what are we doing? We've got a bill here that's full of the ability to raise new user fees and service charges at the municipal level to make up for the cut in revenues that they will be receiving from the provincial government when you cut their transfers. Why is it that you're doing all this? Why is it that you're breaking all of these promises? Because your plan never added up in the first place.

Let's go back to it. During the campaign and before the campaign, how many times did you hear us say, "It doesn't add up"? The numbers just don't add up, because they never did. The Conservative Party's biggest lie in that campaign was that the folks of Ontario can have it all: You can have a 30% tax cut, you can balance the budget and you can do that without cutting health care, without cutting law enforcement, without cutting classroom education, without cutting all those things that we know build our communities and keep our communities healthy and safe. "We won't touch any of those things. We'll promise you the moon on all of those things, and we'll give you a tax cut, and we'll balance the budget."

It couldn't be done and now you're proving us right, because your Finance minister is trying to come to terms with the fiscal impossibility of the Common Sense Revolution. And you know who's paying for it? The people of Ontario, with cuts that are coming much deeper, much faster, much harder than they need to be; with a gutting of essential services in the broader public sector, services that people and communities, that families rely on; with people losing their jobs, with a drag in the economy that's going to happen as result of that, with no effort on the part of this government for any kind of job creation.

The people of the province are paying, and are going to keep paying over and over again, for your campaign promises that were unrealistic from day one, for campaign promises that lied to the people at that point in time, because your folks inside knew in fact that it wasn't realistic, and for a tax cut that is going to primarily benefit the wealthiest people in this province.

You are imposing user fees on seniors, on people with mental disabilities who require medication, on psychiatric patients who require medication and who are living on the marginal edges of the economy. That's where you're getting the money from. That's who you're taking it from in order to give it to the wealthiest Ontarians in terms of a tax break. That's your Common Sense Revolution.

I hope people are listening, and I hope people will review this day after day after day from this point forward. When you pass this bill, every time you use one of those draconian powers, every time one of your cabinet ministers, behind closed doors, signs a little piece of paper and takes another piece of Ontario—because that's what's going to be happening—day after day after day, every time that happens, we'll be there to point it out to folks, to show them what you're doing, to show them another broken promise, to show them another lie of the Common Sense Revolution.

Day after day people are going to see that unfold, and I believe there will be a different revolution. I believe there'll be a counter-revolution in this province. People are going to rise up and say to you: "Stop the insanity. Stop this tax cut. I don't want your blood money. I don't need a tax cut more than senior citizens need their necessary medication or people with disabilities need their Wheel-Trans. Take a look at the services you are taking away from the infrastructure of our community, our caring communities, in order to pay for your unrealistic tax cut promise."

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When people realize that the ordinary working folks who are going to get \$300 or \$400 or so benefit out of your tax cut are going to be paying two or three times that in new user fees at the municipal level, do you think they won't understand the shell game that's going on? Do you think you're going to pull one over on them and say: "Look, we're the great provincial government. We've given you a tax cut. It's those bad municipalities who are raising all of those fees. Go after them. The accountability rests there"? What a sham, what a shell game and what a fundamental violation of another Common Sense Revolution promise, that you wouldn't pass taxes down to another level, that you would stop municipalities from raising their taxes because you understood that there was only one taxpayer.

You said that a tax at any level—a user fee is a tax at any level—was going to cost jobs, yet you've created a whole piece of legislation, the framework of which is to hand over the power to municipalities to raise and tax anything that moves. But of course you say: "No new taxes. It's not us, it's the municipality."

Mr Kormos: Did they lie?

Ms Lankin: My colleague says, "Did they lie?" They lied through their teeth every day in that campaign, either that or a whole bunch of you didn't have a clue what you were talking about, because what you said then is not what you're doing now.

What's going to be left of this province after four years? I despair. I despair the rebuilding job that it's going to take when you guys are out of power. And mark my words, you will be. You have turned around in a direction that the public of Ontario does not support. It's not what you promised them, it's not what you campaigned on, it's not what they thought you meant, and now you're out there hiding behind this Common Sense Revolution and your fiscal mantra that, "This is all to be expected" and "This is all what the public wants" and "We've got to move ahead." Well, you move ahead, I believe, at your own peril, but unfortunately also at the peril of the people of Ontario.

Our job is not over here today when this bill passes. Our job has just begun. We will, day after day, continue to monitor what you're doing with these new powers you take unto yourself, continue to expose to public scrutiny the actions of your government, the effects on the people of this province and what it will mean for our future generations, and hopefully we will all be around to pick up the pieces after you're gone as well.

Mr Curling: Mr Speaker, on a point of privilege: I was given a mandate to speak in this House and my privilege has been denied to present thousands of petitions that were given to me by the people of this province.

The Acting Speaker: Take your seat, please. It was previously agreed that there would be no petitions, that there would be no members' statements.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): It's with considerable reluctance that I rise to join in the debate on third reading of this bill. My reluctance is not solely due to the fact that about an hour ago my daughter

gave birth to our first grandchild—it's a little hard to refocus—and I've just heard the news.

My reluctance to join in the third reading debate on this bill is because I know that within a very short period of time, this debate is going to lead inevitably to voting on this bill, and in my view it is a bill that should have been ruled out of order when it was first presented.

I am reluctant to begin this third reading debate because after three weeks of hearings and a week of clause-by-clause amendments, we have barely begun to understand what is in this bill and what the impact of its measures might be on people and on the quality of life in our communities.

This bill violates, and it has violated from the moment it was presented, any reasonable sense of responsible government or of due diligence in the legislative process and there has been no sense at all of acceptable democratic process.

It is bad legislation, it is bad public policy, it is a bully bill pushed through in a bullying way by a bullying government. This bill, once it is passed within the hour, will let this government continue to be a bully in the future. It sets out literally dozens of areas in which the government can act in the future through regulation, and that means again there will be no due process. There'll be no legislative scrutiny or debate. There will be no guarantee of consultation and in most cases there will be no public notice even required, since the government members in committee voted down amendment after amendment that would have simply required that they notify the public when they make laws that affect them. Even that was too much for this government to agree to, to check its unfettered powers.

This government will now have the power to bring about by regulation, by cabinet fiat, fundamental changes that will affect the lives of every Ontario citizen. They can determine what doctors can practise in our communities—not just how many; they can even determine which doctors will be chosen to practise medicine in which communities. They can decide what medical treatments and what medications will be given. They can go out and restructure our municipalities. They can dictate how our cities and towns will be run. Municipalities think they've been given new powers under this bill. In fact, this government can regulate them in ways that they haven't even begun to imagine.

The Minister of Health now has powers beyond any belief because he can go in and shut down our hospitals or take them over all by himself, or he can tell somebody else to go and do it and then he can wash his hands of the whole business, the whole nasty business of coming into a community and shutting down the hospital. The Minister of Health doesn't even have to check with cabinet. He can do this all on his own or tell someone else to do it.

And the powers don't end there. This government can deny payment for medical services that it didn't think were necessary after the services have been given. It can deny access to private citizens seeking information. It can dismiss their requests as frivolous. It can now raid public pension funds and do it legally because this government has discovered that when the court says, "You're break-

ing the law," there's no problem if you're the government with a majority. You just change the law so you can do whatever you wanted to do and you can do it legally, and this is without a doubt the most extensive, the most intrusive and will be the most invasive power grab in Ontario history.

Because of this bill's scope and its complexity and the sheer number of other statutes it affected—44 other acts of this Legislature are changed; three new acts are created—it has required an incredible amount of analysis just to know what the bill actually says, and that has made it extremely difficult for concerned citizens to know what is in the bill, exactly what it involves, let alone to interpret what it means, and they have certainly not had forthcoming answers from any member of the government when they've raised their questions. We've seen individuals make an effort to get hold of this bill at personal cost, because the government was charging them \$25 to get a copy of the bill itself. They've made the effort to read it, to prepare presentations in a limited amount of time, and I suggest that was a powerful testament to the desire of citizens in this province to make their views known.

The fact that there were more than 1,000 individuals and groups that wanted to be heard and didn't get on the list was a measure of the breadth and the depth of the concern that people have about this bill. When you see this government ignore the criticism because they say it comes from vested interests, when you see them dismiss the 1,000 people who didn't get to be heard because, as the Premier said today, they'd allowed enough time for genuine concerns to be heard, when you hear this government dismiss the concerns of the thousands of citizens as simply representing those special interests, I think it speaks volumes about this government's appreciation of the democratic right to make dissenting views heard and about this government's readiness to silence the people of this province.

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After four weeks of intensive consideration, much of this bill and its interpretation and its future impact remains unclear, but several things about this government have become abundantly clear. The first: This is a government that did not want to listen, that does not want to listen and will not listen in the future. This is a government that wanted this draconian bill passed before Christmas, with no public hearings and little legislative debate. The government hoped that if it rammed through such a complicated piece of legislation—who's actually going to look at a 211-page bill and all the other 44 bills you had to read to understand it?—no one would have any idea what this bill involved. They actually figured that by the time people started to become aware of the fundamental changes that this bill would bring about in their lives and their communities, it would just be too late for the opposition or the public to do anything about it.

The government tries to defend this incredible violation of the democratic process by saying, "Well, we need the powers this bill gives us; we need the powers to do whatever we deem necessary to fulfil our agenda," and in many cases as they pursue that agenda, they will give

those affected no opportunity to be heard and no right to appeal this government's unilateral decisions.

Well, the outrage over this government's intent has been almost universal, and it has forced the government to make some efforts at appeasement. But as we know, having looked at the minimal amendments the government brought forward, the powers that this government wanted, this government has kept, and I believe this government will use those powers. They can still restructure municipalities without legislation. The fact that they have to hold at least one public meeting before they take over is not going to give the communities that are taken over any comfort at all. The Minister of Health can still close hospitals unilaterally or let someone else do the dirty work for him, and now he has to give 30 days' notice before the axe falls. It took hours of argument just to get the agreement that there should at least be "due regard" to the community planning process before the minister acts.

No one will be assured that this government has any interest in real consultation in any area, not after they tried to ram this bill through, not after they ignored day after day of calls to extend the hearings, not after they left hundreds of people frustrated at having been denied a chance to speak, not after they refused even a one-week extension of the clause-by-clause hearings, leaving 400 amendments to be voted on without discussion or any question for clarification. Is that responsible government?

Mrs McLeod: Government members couldn't even be given the time to tell people the changes they were making with their 160 amendments made to this bill that they wanted to have law before Christmas, amendments that they were scrambling to bring in at the last minute just to make this bad bill a little better by fixing the worst of their mistakes. Most certainly the public will not trust this government's intention to take the time to find out what is truly in the public interest, not after seeing this government so determined to give itself powers that no government had ever sought before to act unilaterally, without due process. One presenter said it all when he said, "When this government has shown such a cavalier attitude towards public opinion, how can you trust them to act in the public interest?"

The second thing we've learned is that this government doesn't want to admit that it was wrong. One area of concern the government had to address was the bill's intrusive violation of confidential medical records. Jim Wilson, before Christmas, was insistent that there was no problem; Bill 26 did not invade personal privacy at all. The privacy commissioner disagreed and they had to fix the bill, and yet the minister still says Bill 26 always protected confidentiality. How could he say that after the privacy commissioner said this was an intrusive violation of personal, confidential records? For that matter, how can the Health minister continue to say, after all the concerns that have been expressed about this bill and about the health provisions of this bill, that the opposition is making up all the concerns, that this is all just politics and rhetoric? And then again, why did the Health minister, Jim Wilson, never come himself to hear those very concerns?

Then we had the Minister of Municipal Affairs, who should have drafted his resignation letter along with the amendments he brought forward, because we all remember him saying he would resign if it could be proven to him that the bill allowed municipalities to raise new taxes like gas taxes or a head tax. He had to change the legislation, but because it would force his resignation to admit he was wrong, he's not going to acknowledge he was wrong in the first place, and unfortunately he shows little sign of resigning.

The government doesn't like to admit that they were wrong, because they so categorically and absolutely stated that they were right before Christmas. Now it is apparent that the ministers did not know what was in the bill, let alone what this bill could do. Mr Leach didn't seem to know even last week that this bill would allow municipalities to put tolls on any road, and even today he says, "Well, yes, they can put tolls on a road; they just can't collect the tolls." What a ludicrous answer from a government minister presenting such sweeping legislation.

Then the Premier didn't seem to know that municipalities could charge user fees for essential services like fire and police, but then at least the Premier didn't pretend to know anything about the bill at all. Even the Finance minister says he doesn't know much about the details of the bill. This is a bill that is a finance bill, and it stands in the name of the Finance minister. When ministers who are responsible for implementing legislation don't understand it, the implications for the future of this province are truly frightening. And when the Premier does not even care to understand his bill, it is clear that our province has completely irresponsible leadership.

Now at least, thanks to public hearings, the public has a better understanding of what this bill and this government are all about.

The third thing we now know is that this government does not want people to know what it's doing and what it plans to do. I think of one point at which the government issued a pamphlet to correct the "myths" about Bill 26. It was called Ten Great Things About Bill 26 That You Won't Hear from the Vested Interests. The pamphlet was done anonymously in the hope that no one would know that this was pure government spin. The 10 things they mentioned had absolutely nothing to do with what was in Bill 26. Even then, it was all blatantly misleading, as have been the statements of government members at every point on this bill.

Why, as so many presenters have asked, would this government, if it is convinced that it is doing right, if it is convinced it is acting in the public interest, be so determined to avoid public awareness, let alone public scrutiny? I think some members of the government—at least those members of the government who had any idea what this bill was about, if in fact there are any members of the government who had any idea what this bill was about—knew that the public would never accept a bill that gave cabinet and individual ministers such sweeping and unchecked powers, and that's why they've rammed this through. I think the members of this government really believe that an electoral majority gives them a licence to ignore even the most basic democratic processes, and that is the source of their arrogance—that and the belief that only they are right.

But that doesn't answer the question, where did this bill come from? I really think Tom Long and Leslie Noble and some of the other backroom boys and girls got together, and in their zeal to ram through their ideological agenda they put together a legislative juggernaut. They went to Mike Harris and Ernie Eves and they said, "Never mind that you don't understand how the juggernaut works; just get in there and drive." Tom and the gang said: "Never mind that Al Leach and Jim Wilson don't understand it and they might look foolish trying to defend this thing; just keep on driving. And never mind that the backbenchers haven't seen it and they can't defend it to their constituents; just keep on driving."

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But a funny thing happened along the way. One evening in December, Alvin Curling took his seat and he said, "No." He said, "This juggernaut will not pass without public scrutiny." Our caucus took a stand with Alvin Curling and also said no. The NDP caucus took a stand and it too said no, and people from across this province phoned in and faxed and they said no.

So this government, against its wishes and against its plans, against the advice of Tom Long and the backroom gang, was forced to hold a few weeks of public hearings. Three weeks of public presentations, backed by an outpouring of outrage from even the most unexpected quarters, have told this government and their backroom gang that you can't ram something like this through quite so easily. Yet this government still takes unto itself powers to act unilaterally.

Many presenters expressed real fear of the unknown. We're here today with so little time for debate, no time in committee to discuss the hundreds of amendments that were brought forward to address the public concerns, no time even to discuss the government's changes to its bill, no time today to even talk about section by section of this bill that gives real rise to public fears: real fears about the copayments, user fees, coming from a government that said, "No new user fees in health care," real fears about what that will do to psychiatric patients, for whom the cost of this would be \$40 a month out of their limited allowance, and from whom we heard time and time again advocates say they won't take their medication, and that is dangerous.

We're not going to hear about deregulation and the ludicrousness of people in small communities having to pay high prices for their drugs and parents of sick kids having to go from drugstore to drugstore to barter for their drugs, because that's exactly what this bill will do.

We heard about the fears people have because they worry about what this bill will do in the future. They worry about how their access to health care will be affected. They worry about whether user fees for essential services are going to affect public safety. They worry that finances, rather than human concern, will be the deciding factor in every situation.

This government has given the public reason to worry, because this bill is not about constructive, thoughtful change in our social systems and in the ways we are governed; this is a finance bill. The powers this government seeks are the powers it needs to fulfil an irresponsible financial agenda. This government wants the power

to make cuts and to make them deep and fast for one reason and one reason only, and that is to deliver its income tax cut to the most well-to-do in our province.

The cuts this government has made—this government that said it would not cut health care, and then cut health care by \$1.5 billion the same day the Minister of Finance introduced this bill—those cuts are arbitrary. They do not reflect savings that have actually been achieved.

The government is now going to step in and make sure they're found, and they're going to do that whether it is in the public interest or not. It will be the government's agenda, the government's needs, that will determine what will be cut. It will not be the public interest, it will not be the community that is the priority; it will be the government's cuts.

With five minutes left through my wrapup speech for our caucus to express all of the concerns and all of the frustrations that have built over the last months, as we have come to understand how sweeping this legislation is, I set aside all of those concerns and all I can say is that this bill is not about good public policy. This bill has never been about good public policy. It is about cuts and the power to make them. It is about a government that will ignore not only the public view, but the impact of its actions on the people who are affected. The end will be all that matters.

We end the debate on this bill with a level of frustration that reflects the outrage and the fear that we have heard in community after community. We have worked hard to change this bill, hoping the government would at least respond to the clearest public concerns, hoping that the bill could be made less dangerous. There were 200 Liberal amendments proposed. Every one of those was in order. They were a response to what we heard in three weeks of public hearings, and this government did not even consider them.

On the last day of what had become a farce in the committee, where we looked at amendments and ended up dealing only with 45 of 450 amendments, on the last day of that amendment process, one of the government members suggested that we were bogged down in trivia. He suggested that we all had to regain our perspective, that all of this was about government achieving its grand agenda, and that it was tough to be a government member because the government members were just going to have to pay the price of the criticism that they would receive; they would have to pay the price of the criticism of dismissing the concerns of those hundreds and hundreds of people who presented their very real fears and who asked very legitimate questions of this government about what they would do.

I confess that my response to that lecture, after the three weeks that I spent travelling with the committee and listening to concerns and working hard to try and respond to them by presenting what were indeed detailed but we believe thoughtful amendments to make this awful bill better, was uncharacteristically emotional. But it is a fact that I travel 1,000 miles from my home every week to do a job that I happen to believe is important. I value the trust placed in me to consider the concerns of the people I represent, and I expect that every member of this House should feel the same.

I believe the responsibility that we're given as legislators to make the laws that govern people's lives to be the highest trust possible, and I happen to feel, as humbling as that thought can be, that it is through our effort that democracy—government by the people, of the people, for the people—is kept strong.

Because I believe that good government actually makes a difference in people's lives and that good legislation is the basis for good government, I can tell you that I am truly dismayed when we cannot stop bad legislation from passing, and this is bad legislation. This legislation is so bad in so many ways across so many areas that it makes me and every member of my caucus afraid, truly afraid, for the future under this government.

I say to the members of the government who somehow think that this is all political gamesmanship to think seriously about the concerns that some of us have heard in the last three weeks. I suggest you think very carefully about hearing the voices of your constituencies, because I believe that as the worst fears that people have today start to become real, and as more and more people come to see what this bill is all about and what it will mean, there will be even more outrage in community after community across this province.

I know that there will also be today and in the days to come an incredible sense of powerlessness. People will feel disenfranchised, and people who believe in democracy will not accept being disenfranchised. They will not accept being voiceless and they will not accept powerlessness, because powerlessness is a condition that people will refuse to put up with.

When community hospitals start shutting down, people will see the long arm of Mike Harris and they will raise their voices, and when they start to see user fee after user fee being introduced on prescription drugs and parks and library books and garbage collection and firefighters and police, they will see the long arm of Mike Harris and they will raise their voices.

I remind the Premier, who is still not present to hear this debate, that when you sow the wind, you will reap a whirlwind, and I warn Mr Harris that the whirlwind will come sooner than he thinks.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): Before I start my remarks about Bill 26, I think it would be in order for me to make some comment about the leader of the third party, the member for York South.

I can tell you that in my time in this Legislature I don't think I've come across an elected representative of any political party who has more integrity than Mr Rae. I have differed from Mr Rae, as I'm sure he will be all too willing to agree, on matters of a political nature. We've disagreed as to certain pieces of legislation, both inside and outside of government. We've disagreed from time to time on various tactics that are used by different governments. But I don't think anybody could ever question the fact that Bob Rae is a man of principle, that he is an elected representative of the utmost integrity and that he has spent a good portion of his life representing people of the province of Ontario and indeed Canadians.

1730

I want to revert back to when I was given the privilege by the then Premier of the province of accompanying him, along with Charles Beer, across the country, as I'm sure he will reflect, with respect to the Charlottetown accord. I can tell you that the honour and the treatment that I was shown by the then Premier certainly recognized that opposition members had a vital and important role to play in the constitutional process.

I would just like to say to Mr Rae today that we respect your decision to leave public life, as you point out, at this particular point in time. I certainly wish you and your family well, sir, in whatever you choose to do. I think if anybody has earned the right to success, respect and a little bit more time of your own with your family, it is you. Thank you.

I would like to speak on third reading of Bill 26, the Savings and Restructuring Act, 1995. I would like to thank all members of the committee, and I mean all political parties, for their hard work over the past few weeks. I do, however, at the outset want to clarify a few things that I think individual members have not exactly explained to the public when they've been talking about Bill 26.

One of the myths, I think, that the opposition parties have tried to expound on on Bill 26 is that we sort of mysteriously slipped this bill in through the back door.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): Well, you did.

Hon Mr Eves: The member for Scarborough-Agincourt is saying, "Well, you did." I want to tell him and every other member of the opposition that both opposition House leaders were asked if it would be appropriate, as has been done since Confederation in this place, that after my economic statement on November 29, to revert to introduction of bills. I did not get a response from the member for St Catharines, with all due respect to him. I did get a response, a very definite one, from the member for Windsor-Walkerville.

Interjection: Riverside.

Hon Mr Eves: Riverside, sorry. I wouldn't want to make that mistake. He indicated to me in no uncertain terms that whatever we decided to do, he was against it. That's what he said. He hadn't seen the bill, he didn't know what it was going to say, but he was against it; if we were for it, he was against it.

The opposition parties, breaching a tradition that's been in this place for well over 100 years, left the government with absolutely no alternative but to introduce the bill the way they did if it was going to be introduced before the last 15 sessional days. The members opposite know full well the bill was coming, and the NDP House leader absolutely refused to allow the bill to be introduced in its normal fashion. So we introduced it in the only fashion available to us.

Mrs Caplan: You were sneaky, a sneak.

Hon Mr Eves: It wasn't snuck; it was introduced by my colleague the Chair of Management Board. Give me a break.

Mrs Boyd: In a way that nobody would know.

Hon Mr Eves: Everybody knew. We told you up front. I thought you used to be the Attorney General.

We also indicated in House leaders' meetings, yes, a preference for passing the bill before the Christmas break, and yes—I know the opposition members won't like this—we asked them to sit an extra week, the week of December 18, to deliberate on this bill. But heaven forbid, we wouldn't want to interfere with their vacation now, would we? We also asked that they return on January 2 to start deliberation on the bill. They didn't want to sit the week of January 2. That was not cricket: "We can't be here in the week of January. We don't want to work that week." But their suggestion to me was, we can get this bill passed before—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, order. I can't hear the minister. I'd like some peace.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, order.

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for Cochrane South is out of order.

Hon Mr Eves: I offered during our negotiation with the other two House leaders that there should be a week between the end of public hearings and clause-by-clause deliberation of the bill so that members of the committee and members of the public could see the amendments. The opposition refused. They didn't want to sit the week of January 2; they didn't want to have a break week between the end of public hearings and clause-by-clause—their choice, not mine. That was their choice and now they're complaining about it. I just want the public to understand that it was their choice that we do not have that week to talk about those amendments. They chose to do it that way.

The bill does provide tools to our transfer partners to implement measures announced in the fall fiscal economic statement on November 29. These measures will renew Ontario's public services and they will get spending in the province under control.

Ontarians have told us that the province must change the way it operates. It must be able to compete in the global economy. We are spending \$1 million an hour more than we take in in revenue. I know the former Finance minister doesn't want to be reminded of that fact, but it is a fact, and it is a fact that every Ontarian understands even if his government didn't.

The province's debt is now approximately \$100 billion. In this fiscal year alone we will spend \$9 billion on interest payments alone. Imagine how many services that could provide to seniors, to the needy, to educate our young people, to health care.

Why don't we have that \$9 billion available to us? Because of those two political parties over there that racked up this huge \$100-billion debt with an unlimited credit card that they are going to ask future generations of Ontarians to pay for. Nine billion dollars a year is more than the province spends on hospitals. It is more than is spent on all levels of education in the province combined.

During my pre-statement consultations that I had with health care professionals, with hospitals, with educators, with municipal officials, they all made it clear that they needed the tools to allow them to adjust to reduced funding and to continue to provide essential services to the public. They understand something that the opposition parties don't understand: that everybody in the province of Ontario has to be part of the solution and not part of the problem.

Bill 26 provides measures to streamline the provincial government and steps to reduce costs, such as requiring interest arbitrators to consider an employer's ability to pay when making decisions on wages. I know that will be a thought that's totally foreign to some of the opposition members, but I think that we do have to understand the employer's ability to pay.

It gives municipalities the flexibility to charge user fees for services, as municipalities in other provinces already have. It modernizes Ontario municipalities' authority to license more types of businesses, to update fee levels that haven't changed in decade upon decade in the province of Ontario. Municipalities will be able to distribute responsibilities between county and regional governments and local municipalities so they can provide services more efficiently at reduced costs and eliminate duplication.

1740

There were four major amendments made to the municipal section of the bill. They will be able to provide more flexibility as to how they raise revenue. They are unequivocally prohibited from imposing income, sales or gasoline taxes to do so. Poll taxes or any other similar fee or charge imposed on an individual just because that person resides in a municipality are also prohibited. Reasonable licence fees can be charged but cannot be used as a tool simply to raise revenue. Local restructuring will not be made unless a request comes from a municipality or at least 75 residents of an unstructured area. The minister must appoint a commission and public input must be given. These commissions cannot be appointed after December 31, 1999. The provision is going to be sunsetted.

In my own riding of Parry Sound there are already three separate groups of municipalities, ranging from three municipalities to 12, talking about reorganizing and restructuring. They understand that they have to be part of the solution. I don't know why you people don't understand that you have to be part of the solution.

Bill 26 provides the tools to make hospital restructuring easier, to reform the Ontario drug benefit program to make it more in line with programs elsewhere. We are the last province in Canada to have cost-sharing with its drug plan. The opposition members never seem to mention the 140,000 lower-income, hardworking Ontarians who now will be added to the drug benefit plan who were excluded by their plan. They don't care about those people. They work for a living. It will provide the tools to restructure health services, to ensure that quality care health services are delivered in an efficient manner, that resources focus on front-line patient care, that the use of existing resources is improved, and every cent saved will

be reinvested in the health care system of the province of Ontario, as we promised.

The term of the Health Services Restructuring Commission is limited to four years. We are sunsetting the powers of the Minister of Health in four years with respect to the closure/amalgamation of hospitals, transfer of hospital programs or issuing directions to hospitals. We are clarifying the process by which the minister can appoint a hospital supervisor, as a matter of fact, by giving a minimum of 14 days' notice. We are removing the ability of the minister to prescribe provision of bylaws to be passed by a hospital.

The Ontario Hospital Association was pleased with the government's flexibility in their amendment. Their chair, Bob Muir, said on January 17, and I quote, "Your response to our proposals is a welcome signal of your government's willingness to work in partnership with hospitals."

It was the previous government that introduced the hospital restructuring commission for the greater Metropolitan Toronto area in February 1994. What were you going to do with that study that you commissioned? Were you going to ignore it, I say to the members over there? Of course they weren't going to ignore it. They would have done the same thing that this government is doing today, I hope.

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for Beaches-Woodbine is out of order.

Hon Mr Eves: They have to be part of the solution to our problem. They don't want to be part of the problem. All Ontarians have to contribute.

As House leader, as I've said, I met with my counterparts in the other two parties. We negotiated in good faith the timing of these committee hearings and third reading of Bill 26. During these three weeks of hearings the committee received more than 1,000 submissions, travelled to 11 different communities and heard more than 450 presentations. The government has made significant amendments to the legislation by the input received from the public.

Yes, Bill 26 contains some strong measures for difficult times after a decade of overspending. I can tell you, change is necessary, and while change can sometimes be frightening and challenging, in the province of Ontario today it is absolutely necessary. We are committed to balancing the budget, returning common sense to Ontario finances, if there is to be a future for the province of Ontario, the young people and future generations.

The Speaker: Mr Wilson has moved third reading of Bill 26.

All those in favour of the motion, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1746 to 1751.

The Speaker: All those in favour of Mr Wilson's motion, please rise one at a time.

Ayes

| | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Arnott, Ted | Guzzo, Garry J. | Parker, John L. |
| Baird, John R. | Hardeman, Ernie | Pettit, Trevor |
| Barrett, Toby | Harnick, Charles | Preston, Peter |
| Bassett, Isabel | Harris, Michael D. | Rollins, E.J. Douglas |
| Beaubien, Marcel | Hastings, John | Ross, Lillian |
| Boushy, Dave | Hodgson, Chris | Runciman, Bob |
| Brown, Jim | Hudak, Tim | Sampson, Rob |
| Carr, Gary | Jackson, Cameron | Shea, Derwyn |
| Carroll, Jack | Johns, Helen | Sheehan, Frank |
| Chudleigh, Ted | Johnson, Bert | Skarica, Toni |
| Clement, Tony | Johnson, David | Smith, Bruce |
| Cunningham, Dianne | Johnson, Ron | Snobelen, John |
| Danford, Harry | Jordan, Leo | Spina, Joseph |
| DeFaria, Carl | Kells, Morley | Sterling, Norman W. |
| Doyle, Ed | Klees, Frank | Stewart, R. Gary |
| Ecker, Janet | Leach, Al | Stockwell, Chris |
| Elliott, Brenda | Leadston, Gary L. | Tilson, David |
| Eves, Ernie L. | Martiniuk, Gerry | Tsubouchi, David H. |
| Fisher, Barbara | Maves, Bart | Turnbull, David |
| Flaherty, Jim | Munro, Julia | Vankoughnet, Bill |
| Ford, Douglas B. | Murdoch, Bill | Villeneuve, Noble |
| Fox, Gary | Mushinski, Marilyn | Wettlaufer, Wayne |
| Froese, Tom | Newman, Dan | Wilson, Jim |
| Galt, Doug | O'Toole, John | Witmer, Elizabeth |
| Gilchrist, Steve | Ouellette, Jerry J. | Wood, Bob |
| Grimmett, Bill | Palladini, Al | Young, Terence H. |

The Speaker: All those opposed will please rise one at a time.

Nays

| | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Agostino, Dominic | Curling, Alvin | McLeod, Lyn |
| Bartolucci, Rick | Duncan, Dwight | Miclash, Frank |
| Bisson, Gilles | Gerretsen, John | Morin, Gilles E. |
| Boyd, Marion | Grandmaitre, Bernard | North, Peter |
| Bradley, James J. | Gravelle, Michael | Patten, Richard |
| Brown, Michael A. | Hampton, Howard | Phillips, Gerry |
| Caplan, Elinor | Hoy, Pat | Pouliot, Gilles |
| Castrilli, Annamarie | Kormos, Peter | Pupatello, Sandra |
| Christopherson, David | Kwinter, Monte | Rae, Bob |
| Churley, Marilyn | Lalonde, Jean-Marc | Ramsay, David |
| Cleary, John C. | Lankin, Frances | Ruprecht, Tony |
| Colle, Mike | Laughren, Floyd | Sergio, Mario |
| Conway, Sean G. | Marchese, Rosario | Silipo, Tony |
| Cooke, David S. | Martel, Shelley | Wildman, Bud |
| Cordiano, Joseph | Martin, Tony | Wood, Len |
| Crozier, Bruce | McGuinty, Dalton | |

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 78; the nays 47.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Being almost 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until March 18 at 1:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1800.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Lt Col The Hon / L'hon Henry N.R. Jackman CM, KStJ, BA, LLB, LLD

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Allan K. McLean

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Senior Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Journals / Greffier adjoint principal et Greffier des journaux: Alex D. McFedries

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees / Greffière adjointe et Greffière des comités: Deborah Deller

Sergeant at Arms / Sergent d'armes: Thomas Stelling

| Member / Député(e) | Constituency / Circonscription | Party / Parti | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|---|--------------------------------|---------------|--|
| Agostino, Dominic | Hamilton East / -Est | L | |
| Arnott, Ted | Wellington | PC | |
| Baird, John R. | Nepean | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre du Travail |
| Barrett, Toby | Norfolk | PC | |
| Bartolucci, Rick | Sudbury | L | |
| Bassett, Isabel | St Andrew-St Patrick | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, deputy government House leader / adjointe parlementaire du ministre des Finances, chef parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement |
| Beaubien, Marcel | Lambton | PC | parliamentary assistant (rural affairs) to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / adjoint parlementaire (secteur Affaires rurales) du ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales |
| Bisson, Gilles | Cochrane South / -Sud | ND | |
| Boushy, Dave | Sarnia | PC | |
| Boyd, Marion | London Centre / -Centre | ND | |
| Bradley, James J. | St Catharines | L | deputy opposition leader, opposition House leader / chef adjoint de l'opposition, chef parlementaire de l'opposition |
| Brown, Jim | Scarborough West / -Ouest | PC | |
| Brown, Michael A. | Algoma-Manitoulin | L | deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition |
| Caplan, Elinor | Oriole | L | chief opposition whip / whip en chef de l'opposition |
| Carr, Gary | Oakville South / -Sud | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / adjoint parlementaire du solliciteur général et du ministre des Services correctionnels |
| Carroll, Jack | Chatham-Kent | PC | |
| Castrilli, Annamarie | Downsview | L | |
| Chiarelli, Robert | Ottawa West / -Ouest | L | |
| Christopherson, David | Hamilton Centre / -Centre | ND | deputy New Democratic Party whip / whip adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique |
| Chudleigh, Ted | Halton North / -Nord | PC | |
| Churley, Marilyn | Riverdale | ND | Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Cleary, John C. | Cornwall | L | |
| Clement, Tony | Brampton South / -Sud | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs |
| Colle, Mike | Oakwood | L | |
| Conway, Sean G. | Renfrew North / -Nord | L | |
| Cooke, David S. | Windsor-Riverside | ND | New Democratic Party House leader / chef parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique |
| Cordiano, Joseph | Lawrence | L | |
| Crozier, Bruce | Essex South / -Sud | L | deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition |
| Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne | London North / -Nord | PC | Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine |
| Curling, Alvin | Scarborough North / -Nord | L | |

| Member / Député(e) | Constituency / Circonscription | Party / Parti | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|---|---|---------------|--|
| Danford, Harry | Hastings-Peterborough | PC | parliamentary assistant (agriculture and food) to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / adjoint parlementaire (secteurs Agriculture et Alimentation) du ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales |
| DeFaria, Carl | Mississauga East / -Est | PC | |
| Doyle, Ed | Wentworth East / -Est | PC | assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement |
| Duncan, Dwight | Windsor-Walkerville | L | |
| Ecker, Janet | Durham West / -Ouest | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services / adjointe parlementaire du ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires |
| Elliott, Hon / L'hon Brenda | Guelph | PC | Minister of Environment and Energy / ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Énergie |
| Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. | Parry Sound | PC | Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance, government House leader / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances, leader parlementaire du gouvernement |
| Fisher, Barbara | Bruce | PC | |
| Flaherty, Jim | Durham Centre / -Centre | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / adjoint parlementaire du ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce |
| Ford, Douglas B. | Etobicoke-Humber | PC | |
| Fox, Gary | Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings / Prince Edward-Lennox-Hastings-Sud | PC | |
| Froese, Tom | St Catharines-Brock | PC | |
| Galt, Doug | Northumberland | PC | parliamentary assistant (environment) to the Minister of Environment and Energy / adjoint parlementaire (secteur Environnement) de la ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Énergie |
| Gerretsen, John | Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles | L | |
| Gilchrist, Steve | Scarborough East / -Est | PC | |
| Grandmaître, Bernard | Ottawa East / -Est | L | |
| Gravelle, Michael | Port Arthur | L | |
| Grimmett, Bill | Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne | PC | parliamentary assistant (tourism) to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / adjoint parlementaire (secteur Tourisme) du ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme |
| Guzzo, Garry J. | Ottawa-Rideau | PC | parliamentary assistant (energy) to the Minister of Environment and Energy / adjoint parlementaire (secteur Énergie) de la ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Énergie |
| Hampton, Howard | Rainy River | ND | |
| Hardeman, Ernie | Oxford | PC | parliamentary assistant (municipal affairs – rural) to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / adjoint parlementaire (Affaires municipales – secteur rural) du ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement |
| Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles | Willowdale | PC | Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones |
| Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. | Nipissing | PC | Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif |
| Hastings, John | Etobicoke-Rexdale | PC | |
| Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris | Victoria-Haliburton | PC | Minister of Natural Resources, Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines |
| Hoy, Pat | Essex-Kent | L | |
| Hudak, Tim | Niagara South / -Sud | PC | |
| Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron | Burlington South / -Sud | PC | Minister without Portfolio (Workers' Compensation Board) / ministre sans portefeuille (Commission des accidents du travail) |
| Johns, Helen | Huron | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health / adjointe parlementaire du ministre de la Santé |

| Member / Député(e) | Constituency / Circonscription | Party / Parti | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|---------------------------------------|--|---------------|---|
| Johnson, Bert | Perth | PC | Deputy Speaker and Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président de la Chambre et Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Johnson, Hon / L'hon David | Don Mills | PC | Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion |
| Johnson, Ron | Brantford | PC | |
| Jordan, Leo | Lanark-Renfrew | PC | deputy government whip / whip adjoint du gouvernement |
| Kells, Morley | Etobicoke-Lakeshore | PC | |
| Klees, Frank | York-Mackenzie | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Richesses naturelles |
| Kormos, Peter | Welland-Thorold | ND | |
| Kwinter, Monte | Wilson Heights | L | |
| Lalonde, Jean-Marc | Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell | L | |
| Lankin, Frances | Beaches-Woodbine | ND | chief New Democratic Party whip / whip en chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique |
| Laughren, Floyd | Nickel Belt | ND | deputy New Democratic Party leader / chef adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique |
| Leach, Hon / L'hon Al | St George-St David | PC | Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement |
| Leadston, Gary L. | Kitchener-Wilmot | PC | |
| Marchese, Rosario | Fort York | ND | |
| Marland, Margaret | Mississauga South / -Sud | PC | |
| Martel, Shelley | Sudbury East / -Est | ND | |
| Martin, Tony | Sault Ste Marie | ND | |
| Martiniuk, Gerry | Cambridge | PC | |
| Maves, Bart | Niagara Falls | PC | |
| McGuinty, Dalton | Ottawa South / -Sud | L | |
| McLean, Hon / L'hon Allan K. | Simcoe East / -Est | PC | Speaker / Président |
| McLeod, Lyn | Fort William | L | Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition |
| Miclash, Frank | Kenora | L | deputy opposition House leader / chef parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition |
| Morin, Gilles E. | Carleton East / -Est | L | First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Munro, Julia | Durham-York | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Premier / adjointe parlementaire du premier ministre |
| Murdoch, Bill | Grey-Owen Sound | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire du ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines |
| Mushinski, Hon / L'hon Marilyn | Scarborough-Ellesmere | PC | Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs |
| Newman, Dan | Scarborough Centre / -Centre | PC | parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for native affairs / adjoint parlementaire du ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones |
| North, Peter | Elgin | Ind | |
| O'Toole, John R. | Durham East / -Est | PC | |
| Ouellette, Jerry J. | Oshawa | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Transports |
| Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al | York Centre / -Centre | PC | Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports |
| Parker, John L. | York East / -Est | PC | |
| Patten, Richard | Ottawa Centre / -Centre | L | |
| Pettit, Trevor | Hamilton Mountain | PC | |
| Phillips, Gerry | Scarborough-Agincourt | L | |
| Pouliot, Gilles | Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon | ND | |
| Preston, Peter L. | Brant-Haldimand | PC | |
| Pupatello, Sandra | Windsor-Sandwich | L | |

| Member / Député(e) | Constituency / Circonscription | Party / Parti | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|--|--|---------------|--|
| Rae, Bob | York South / -Sud | ND | New Democratic Party leader / chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique |
| Ramsay, David | Timiskaming | L | |
| Rollins, E.J. Douglas | Quinte | PC | |
| Ross, Lillian | Hamilton West / -Ouest | PC | assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement |
| Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. | Leeds-Grenville | PC | Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / solliciteur général et ministre des Services correctionnels |
| Ruprecht, Tony | Parkdale | L | |
| Sampson, Rob | Mississauga West / -Ouest | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Finances |
| Saunderson, Hon / L'hon William | Eglinton | PC | Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme |
| Sergio, Mario | Yorkview | L | |
| Shea, Derwyn | High Park-Swansea | PC | parliamentary assistant (municipal affairs – urban) to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / adjoint parlementaire (Affaires municipales – secteur urbain) du ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement |
| Sheehan, Frank | Lincoln | PC | |
| Silipo, Tony | Dovercourt | ND | deputy New Democratic Party House leader / chef parlementaire adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique |
| Skarica, Toni | Wentworth North / -Nord | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education and Training / adjoint parlementaire du ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation |
| Smith, Bruce | Middlesex | PC | |
| Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John | Mississauga North / -Nord | PC | Minister of Education and Training / ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation |
| Spina, Joseph | Brampton North / -Nord | PC | parliamentary assistant (small business) to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / adjoint parlementaire (secteur petites entreprises) du ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme |
| Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. | Carleton | PC | Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce |
| Stewart, R. Gary | Peterborough | PC | |
| Stockwell, Chris | Etobicoke West / -Ouest | PC | |
| Tascona, Joseph N. | Simcoe Centre / -Centre | PC | |
| Tilson, David | Dufferin-Peel | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General / adjoint parlementaire du procureur général |
| Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. | Markham | PC | Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires |
| Turnbull, David | York Mills | PC | chief government whip / whip en chef du gouvernement |
| Vankoughnet, Bill | Frontenac-Addington | PC | |
| Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble | S-D-G & East Grenville / S-D-G et Grenville-Est | PC | Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones |
| Wettlaufer, Wayne | Kitchener | PC | assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement |
| Wildman, Bud | Algoma | ND | |
| Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim | Simcoe West / -Ouest | PC | Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé |
| Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth | Waterloo North / -Nord | PC | Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail |
| Wood, Bob | London South / -Sud | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / adjoint parlementaire du président du Conseil de gestion |
| Wood, Len | Cochrane North / -Nord | ND | |
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No. 42

N° 42

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 18 March 1996

Lundi 18 mars 1996



Speaker
Honourable Allan K. McLean

Président
L'honorable Allan K. McLean

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 18 March 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 18 mars 1996

*The House met at 1332.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE DISPUTE

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): The people of Ontario, myself included, are becoming increasingly concerned by the way this government is handling the largest strike in Ontario's history, especially when the government holds the cards in settling this strike. There's a message here. When you see thousands of people demonstrating outside the Legislative Building to get your attention, Mr Premier, are you listening? They are telling you your process in dealing with this strike shows no justice and, as the picketers say, "No Justice, No Peace."

These are people's lives you are dealing with. These are the families and individuals who have children to feed, rent to pay, mortgages to pay, bills to be honoured. You must deal with the crisis in our province now in a sensitive manner. You must make every attempt to settle this. When I see Dave Johnson, the minister you have charged with responsibility for negotiating with the Ontario Public Service Employees Union saying he wants to wait and see and let the strike play itself out, I tell you, this is not a game to be played. He insults all of us who believe Ontario is worth standing up for.

Mr Premier, when you were in North Bay last week you thought offering the picketers doughnuts would appease the unrest on the line. The picketers that day didn't accept your doughnuts. I tell you, the province doesn't want doughnuts from you. What Ontarians need are dignity, respect, balance, fairness and good government. As I said, no justice, no peace.

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): This is not a red-letter day for Ontario. The Legislature is surrounded by ordinary citizens, as is every other provincial building in this province.

These are our friends and neighbours. These are our family members, the people who, up until a few weeks ago, delivered the services that all who live in this province rely on. These are your ambulance drivers. These are the people who clear the highways of snow in this province. We have people out there who do research, who manage our resources and who oversee our education and our health care systems.

And why are they there? They are there standing up for their rights to fair treatment and access to a process of just labour relations. They're not asking for anything outlandish, just that their severance, retirement and successor rights be honoured, but even more so, they are fighting for the jobs and services that are so valuable to

the economic and social wellbeing of this province. They are putting their livelihoods on the line for each one of us in this province.

In this province this year, we've had people freeze to death on the streets of this city. We have disease beginning to rear its ugly head. We have TB in Toronto. We've had blood spilled on the steps of this Legislature. Mr Speaker, I ask you to call this government to account.

CITY OF SCARBOROUGH BICENTENNIAL

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I am pleased to rise today as the member for Scarborough Centre in order to celebrate 1996 as the bicentennial of the city of Scarborough.

It was in 1793 that Lieutenant Governor John Graves Simcoe named Scarborough, based on a suggestion by his wife Elizabeth, who fell in love with the shoreline that reminded her of the town of Scarborough, England.

In 1796, 200 years ago this year, the first land patent in Scarborough was granted by the crown to David and Mary Thomson, thus opening the township to new settlement. The Thomsons became the first European settlers in Scarborough just three years later, in 1799.

Scarborough became a township in 1850 and Peter Secor served as the first reeve. By 1900, almost 4,000 people called Scarborough home. Today, Scarborough is home to more than half a million people.

Born and raised in Scarborough Centre, I have watched Scarborough grow throughout the years to become a city of great diversity in which to live, work and play. I am proud to call Scarborough my home. Scarborough has a strong and vibrant business community, a dynamic arts and cultural community, a variety of social, recreational and educational opportunities that are second to none and active community associations with many caring and hardworking residents.

A number of activities are planned in Scarborough throughout the year in order to celebrate Scarborough's bicentennial, and I extend an invitation to every member of this House to come out and experience Scarborough. I would ask the members to join me today in wishing a happy 200th birthday to the city of Scarborough.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE DISPUTE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): On Friday, I attended a noon-hour march in downtown Sudbury. As we wound our way through the streets, we were joined by hundreds of people who spontaneously joined in. The people of Ontario and the people of Sudbury support the OPSEU cause.

It's not about money. It's about balance, it's about justice and it's about fairness. That's why there isn't a

teacher in Ontario who isn't thankful to OPSEU for their cause, that's why there isn't a power worker in Ontario who doesn't understand the importance of OPSEU's stand, why there isn't a CUPE worker in Ontario who doesn't appreciate the relevance of OPSEU's situation, why there isn't a doctor in the province of Ontario who can't sympathize with the sense of government betrayal felt by OPSEU, why there isn't a lawyer in Ontario who can't associate with the hidden agenda of this government, why there isn't a member of a private sector union who doesn't support and appreciate the significance and importance this job action has for the labour movement in Ontario, why the people of Sudbury want you, the government, to listen to us and restore balance, fairness and justice, why the people of Sudbury and Ontario want you to listen to us when we say there cannot be a vibrant Ontario as long as there is no balance, no fairness, no justice.

OPSEU's stand is not about money. It's about balance, fairness and justice.

1340

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): The Harris government continues to show complete contempt for its own employees. They don't seem to care or understand that these are real people with real kids to support, real mortgages to pay, and that they contribute real taxes to the Ontario economy and provide vital services to the people of Ontario. At the very least, they deserve to be treated with respect and to be given a well-stocked toolkit, to use a favourite phrase of the government, so they can try to get back on their feet.

It is completely unfair for any employer to lay off literally thousands of people and at the same time take away pension and successor rights. Mr Harris knows as well as I do that it wouldn't cost taxpayers a penny to be fair to workers whose jobs are being sold off to the highest bidder. If there is a cost, it would be to their Tory friends who are gearing up to make big profits on these services.

At least admit it, Mr Harris; you're beating up on the workers to pay for a tax cut that will mainly benefit your rich friends, a tax cut that the experts say will not do anything to create jobs and help the economy.

I know we're going to hear the mantra "a million dollars an hour" many times today as you try to justify your despicable behaviour. Have you thought how many million dollars an hour it's going to cost the taxpayers to pay for your irresponsible tax cut? Your government has a chance to finally show some competency and fairness for a change. Get on with it. You can end this strike by giving OPSEU workers back their successor rights.

GOOD BEARS OF THE WORLD

Mr Bill Vankoughnet (Frontenac-Addington): I rise today on a sad note in the wake of the unspeakable tragedy at Dunblane, Scotland. A group of community-oriented people in Frontenac, Lennox and Addington and the city of Kingston sent, through the courtesy of Puro-lator Courier Ltd, 16 teddy bears, one each to the families of every slain child, and a mohair bear made especially for the family of their teacher.

The idea for this compassionate action comes from an international charitable organization called Good Bears of the World. Good Bears are people who come from a variety of backgrounds, professions and ages, sharing a common interest in giving, aiding and comforting in a low-key fashion in times of need.

Limestone Teddies of the Greater Kingston Area is a group of volunteers who promote and do the work of Good Bears. It is important to show support for the families of the victims of Dunblane, the family of the Belleville youth killed in Florida and express our concern about violence in any form. I know I speak for all members of this Legislature as we send our deepest regrets to the grieving families and say that our hearts and minds are with them during this time of great pain and frustration.

We hope that the love we send with these bears and the concern we express will be felt by the entire Dunblane and Belleville communities. As we can't be in Dunblane to distribute them personally, these bears are taking our hugs with them.

LABOUR ISSUES

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): Today I want to speak about labour harmony, investment and Tory mismanagement. Labour harmony is an essential component to a healthy and prosperous economy. Investor confidence will drop as a result of this government's policy of deliberately and unnecessarily provoking working people.

For 50 years, governments of all stripes have been adopting laws that improve the lives of working people and encourage a labour climate that enhances investment opportunity. The Tories continue to pursue their recipe for recession. They have demonstrated complete incompetence in the management of labour issues. The strike we're witnessing today was unnecessary. The government is being penny wise and pound foolish.

The strike is but the beginning. London, Hamilton and Kitchener-Waterloo are other examples of what the Tories have done to undermine the province's investment climate. How does the government think that pictures of riot police running through the halls of our Legislature is going to improve investment? How does the government believe that shutdowns of our major industrial centres are making Ontario a better place to invest? Incompetence, lack of foresight and a bullying mentality are the characteristics that best describe this government.

What about the investment in jobs they promised? They're stagnant. The only things that are more stale are the tired rhetoric and broken promises of the government's mindless ideology. No justice, no peace; no peace, no investment.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): We said in this party that when the government declared war on the workers of Ontario through their anti-worker Bill 7, it would leave workers with no choice but to fight back. The strike that we're seeing displayed outside today and across this province is workers having no choice but to do just that: Fight back against a government that has declared war on workers and their representatives.

One of the key issues in this strike is successorship rights. That's a right that workers had in the public sector along with those in the private sector for decades. It had nothing to do with Bill 40 and yet this government said, "When we privatize all those jobs, you as a public sector worker will have no guarantee of benefits, no guarantee of wages, in fact you don't even have a guarantee of being offered that job."

No wonder they're out there fighting for their survival. You've taken away fundamental rights that they were entitled to. It wasn't in the Common Sense Revolution. You didn't talk about it in the campaign. You brought in Bill 7, rammed it through, no public hearings, and then you wonder why people are fighting back.

Take a look at your own agenda. You brought this upon yourself. You've left these workers and tens and thousands of others no choice but to stand up and fight back. Look out the window. There's the Mike Harris Ontario and every one of you Mike Harrisites that played a role in this ought to be ashamed of yourselves.

MARK FYKE

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): I would like to take a moment to speak about a terrible tragedy that struck my riding on the past weekend. The life of Mark Fyke, a young constituent of mine, came to a violent end on Friday night when he was vacationing in Daytona Beach, Florida. The loss of this young man has shocked the country and our community.

Mark's death will be a personal loss for many in the community. I think of the pain his passing will be to his classmates at Nicholson Catholic College, some of whom were with Mark in Florida. Mark will also be missed by the guys he played hockey with in the Belleville Minor Hockey Association. Of course, his death will no doubt be felt by many people he came in contact with at his job at McDonald's.

I want to express our deepest sympathy to his family and to his classmates, particularly the ones who were vacationing with him in Florida.

ST THOMAS PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL

Mr Peter North (Elgin): Today I bring to this Legislature for the Minister of Health some 2,740 clip and care coupons. The coupons signify the people's opposition to the proposed closure of the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital.

These coupons were clipped from our local newspaper, the St Thomas Times-Journal, which has done an admirable job getting this message out. Hundreds of clients will be displaced, hundreds of jobs will be lost or sent to London. Rural communities are losing much of their infrastructure. Health services such as these are a valuable resource for rural communities.

I know, having had many discussions with the minister in the past and his being a rural riding as well, that he would take our concerns very seriously. I believe it is incumbent on both the ministry and the minister to understand the magnitude and potential tragedy of this situation and weigh any decisions carefully.

I would like to close by simply reading the card that I have here in front of me. It says:

"Save our Psych!

"Mr Jim Wilson,

"Minister of Health,

"I ask that you as the Minister of Health for the province of Ontario refrain from implementing a recommendation by the psychiatric hospitals restructuring committee to close the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital in order to allow for more public hearings into the matter. Because the closure of the STPH would have a negative impact on the community, it warrants further study by the government and health officials alike."

It's signed by a woman named Ellen from London, Ontario.

MEMBERS' INTEGRITY

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): I beg to inform the House that I have received a number of requests from the members pursuant to section 30 of the Members' Integrity Act, 1994, to the Honourable Gregory Evans, Integrity Commissioner, for opinions on whether certain members have contravened the act or Ontario parliamentary convention.

These requests and subsequent opinions were received by me during the adjournment and can be found as sessional papers filed with the Clerk of the House.

SPECIAL REPORT, ENVIRONMENTAL COMMISSIONER OF ONTARIO

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): I beg to inform the House that on Wednesday, January 17, 1996, a special report of the Legislative Assembly of Ontario on the Ontario regulation 482/95 and the Environmental Bill of Rights was tabled.

STATUS OF BILL Pr24

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): I beg to inform the House that the Clerk has received a favourable report from the commissioners of estate bills with respect to Bill Pr24, An Act respecting TD Trust Company and Central Guaranty Trust Company.

Accordingly, pursuant to standing order 86(c), the bill stands referred to the standing committee on regulations and private bills.

1350

BY-ELECTION IN YORK SOUTH

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): I beg to inform the House that during the recess a vacancy has occurred in the membership of the House by reason of the resignation of Bob Rae, the member for the electoral district of York South, effective Thursday, February 29, 1996. Accordingly, I have issued my warrant to the chief election officer for the issue of a writ for a by-election.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): I would like to inform the members of the Legislative Assembly that

we have in the Speaker's gallery today legislative interns from the province of Manitoba. Please join me in welcoming our guests.

POLICE ACTION AT DEMONSTRATION

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: as you know, there have been lawful picket lines here at this building as a result of the members of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union being forced into a strike situation. This morning, as you know, that picket line was enhanced by members of the Ontario Protective Service employees' union and other trade unionists and members of the public who have joined them in solidarity, similarly in lawful picket lines. They were orderly picket lines, they were peaceful picket lines, and they were there for their precise and long-acknowledged democratic purpose.

I received a number of reports just within the last hour of what were described to me as riot-equipped police squads storming picket lines and attacking picketers, striking them to the ground, resulting in at least one person being sent by ambulance to a hospital and other persons receiving what were described to me as visible injuries. There may have been yet a second person sent by ambulance to the hospital.

Why I raise this as a matter of privilege is because it similarly was reported to me that the reason for these riot-equipped, baton-equipped, helmeted, shielded police barging and attacking lawful picket lines was to facilitate the entry of Conservative government MPPs into at least one area, if not two of these parliamentary precincts.

I submit with respect, Speaker, that is very much a matter of privilege pursuant to rule 21. We are seeing here and witnessing here within the scope of your jurisdiction, I submit, a most undemocratic and violent utilization of police power to obstruct and interfere with lawful picket lines, resulting in not just the disruption of the picket line—I suppose that would be an unfortunate but recognizable side-effect—but in literal physical attacks on people lawfully assembling for a very lawful purpose, and very specifically to facilitate the entry of Conservative MPPs into these buildings.

I am calling upon you, Speaker, as you have been called upon in the past, to make appropriate inquiries into this matter. I must tell you that if indeed those reports are factual, it's repugnant and certainly to be condemned that lawfully gathered people would be subjected to violent attacks of that nature. It's similarly repugnant that members of this Legislature, and it's reported to me that it was Conservative members, would avail themselves of that type of violent attack on lawfully assembled members of the public so that their whims and fancies—I was speaking of the Conservative members—could be accommodated.

I am asking you, Speaker, to make inquiries into this matter. I submit it is within your jurisdiction, within your responsibility. This should be extremely disturbing. We are witnessing and others have witnessed events out there this very morning which reinforce events of days gone by that are very much not resembling the Ontario most of us believed existed. If this is the new Ontario, then let's

string up the barbed wire right now and put in the anti-tank barriers.

I ask you to make those inquiries.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): I have asked for a report on the activities of today, and I expect to receive that shortly.

ORAL QUESTIONS

JOB SECURITY

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): My first question is for the Premier. Premier, for the last 21 days, this province has witnessed the largest labour dispute in its history. In the months leading up to this strike, you used your legislative bullying power to strip your employees of their rights, and for the past three weeks you have simply let this strike drag on. The message I bring you today from the men and women outside this building and on picket lines across this province is that they will not be bullied into submission.

My question to the Premier is about jobs, because that is really what this strike is all about. In the past, Premier, you have said, and said in writing, that about 13,000 people would lose their jobs, would be fired. You have also said, or your ministers have said, that there could be a lot more, but you won't acknowledge just how many. But your economic statement shows that over the next two years you are planning to cut one third of the government's salary budget. Now, that doesn't mean 13,000 jobs, as you've stated, Premier; it means more like 27,000 jobs will be lost. Will you confirm today that you are planning on firing as many as 27,000 people after this strike is over?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the Chair of Management Board could answer that.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order.

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): First of all, I'd like to react to the statement in the question from the leader of the opposition party that we have allowed this strike to drag on. First of all, again I would say that it was the union that called the strike, not the government that called the strike. We have put a fair and reasonable offer on the table. There is a media blackout that is under way at the present time, so I'm not going to speak to any of the details that have transpired recently. But I will say that it is the objective of this government to reach a settlement at the earliest possible date, and that's how we've been acting over the course of these labour relations: a settlement that is fair and affordable to the taxpayers of the province of Ontario and a settlement that is fair and reasonable to the employees of the province of Ontario.

In terms of the jobs, we speculated through the Common Sense Revolution that this government would certainly have to be downsized, that we would need restructuring. Certainly other governments are going through this. The business community is going through this. We have to be able to deliver better services at a lower cost. We said probably about 13,000 people would be laid off

through the Common Sense Revolution. Those numbers are being fine-tuned. The various ministries are going through their business plans. The estimates procedure is under way. There will be announcements by the Minister of Finance. Certainly through the budget process, there will be announcements leading up to the budget, and then we will know precisely what the size of the civil service will be.

Mrs McLeod: I cannot believe, although I should not be surprised, that this Premier sees his only responsibility to deliver some doughnuts to people on the picket line. In the absence of any accountability from the Premier of Ontario, I will, of necessity, redirect my supplementary questions to the Chair of Management Board and say to him that all of us—all of us—including every person on that picket line, would like to see this strike resolved through an agreement at the bargaining table. We all hope that, for the first time, you and your government may be prepared to engage in some serious negotiations at the bargaining table.

But, Minister, I say to you that it is very difficult for real, good-faith bargaining that leads to a resolution to take place if you keep misstating the facts. The difference between the 13,000 fewer jobs that you said in writing you were going to bring in and the 27,000 fewer jobs that your 33% cut would mean is not a fine-tuning, Minister. It is offensive to every person out there for you to call that a fine-tuning. That is taking a broad axe and a blunt axe to your entire workforce.

1400

It is completely misleading, Minister, for you to say, as you have day after day, that this is all about the taxpayers' interest and balancing the budget. It doesn't take an analysis of that economic statement to know that you're talking about 27,000 jobs and to know why it is that you're looking at cutting those kinds of jobs like there is no tomorrow.

The Speaker: Put your question.

Mrs McLeod: It is the \$5-billion tax cut, Minister and Mr Speaker. That is what is driving the agenda. It is about the most irresponsible and cynical campaign promise that this province has ever seen.

Minister, I ask you, if balancing the budget was truly the reason for your actions of the past weeks and months, will you tell me how you can possibly justify adding more than \$20 billion to the province's debt while you lay off thousands and thousands and thousands of workers, just to give the richest Ontarians an irresponsible tax cut?

The Speaker: That question's been asked.

Hon David Johnson: I want to give two numbers, if I can. The head count in March of 1985, the head count in the Ontario public service, was 80,371. Five years later, by 1990, the head count in the Ontario public service was 88,267. There were 8,000 more people employed in the Ontario public civil service through the term of the Liberal government.

So if we have a problem today that we're trying to come to grips with, a problem of doing better for less, a problem of restructuring the civil service so that the civil service can give the services to the people of the province of Ontario, the health services, the education services, the

Leader of the Opposition should look in the mirror. This is the problem that we are trying to address that gained momentum under the Liberal years from 1985 to 1990. That's when the problem was created.

What we are trying to do, our objective, is to be fair and reasonable to our employees—that is the offer we have put on the table in terms of our final offer—and to restructure the civil service. That's what we are trying to achieve.

Mrs McLeod: The difficulty with this minister and the difficulty with this government is that they give us one number and then two numbers and then three numbers, and all of them are inconsistent with each other. They talk of 13,000 people being laid off and then it's 27,000 people. They talk about a 20% cut and then it's a 33% cut. They talk about balancing the budget, and then they bring in a tax cut that is going to add \$20 billion to the deficit and the debt.

Surely, we're all concerned about balancing budgets. That's why we're so concerned about adding \$20 billion to the debt and why we're so concerned about eliminating thousands of jobs to give that tax cut to the most well-to-do Ontarians.

I say to this minister again, be factual. This strike is not about balancing the budget. Put the numbers on the table. This strike is about 27,000 people losing their jobs, and the fact is that as a result of your tax cut, which is driving those layoffs, 12 months from today, the deficit—let's put real numbers on the table—is still going to be more than \$8 billion. Be honest with the people of this province, Minister. Admit that this strike has nothing to do with balancing the budget. It is about firing thousands of people. It is about privatizing government services, which is why you need to lay off so many public servants. It is about political profit, not the public interest. It is all about keeping an irresponsible campaign promise no matter who gets hurt.

Hon David Johnson: First of all, I want to say that that 27,000 number is not a government number. The Leader of the Opposition knows that. It's some sort of speculation in one newspaper. It is no number that's been put out by the province of Ontario.

I want to tell you one more number. I have a document that the Leader of the Opposition may be familiar with. It's the Liberal red book plan, and in this plan it calls for the Ontario public service to fall by 12,000 people. There it is.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon David Johnson: Mr Speaker, I find—

Interjections.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): There are over 100,000 in the public sector.

The Speaker: The member for St Catharines is out of order. Could we have some order.

Hon David Johnson: I find the line of questioning somewhat insincere and somewhat inconsistent in view of the red book.

I will say again, if the honourable member wants to know what the government is trying to achieve in terms of the negotiations with OPSEU, with the union, we are trying to achieve a settlement that's fair and reasonable

for employees, a settlement that is fair and reasonable to the taxpayers of the province and the ability of this government to restructure and to deliver services on a less costly basis, better services to the people of Ontario.

The Speaker: New question, the leader of the Opposition.

Mrs McLeod: I would be happy to bring Conservative government documents into the House; in fact, I'd bring two documents in. One is the Common Sense Revolution, which talked about 13,000 jobs—indeed it did, in writing. The other was the government's economic statement, which the minister simply does not want to address today, which talked about a 33% cut, which means more like 27,000 jobs, which at one point months ago the minister at least made some allusion to.

I will again attempt to address my question to the Premier, futile as it may be. I say again that this strike is not about balancing a budget and reducing the size of the public service to help you with that. This is about a government that wants to look tough while it delivers its tax cut to the most well-to-do. This strike is not about restructuring the public service so that it will be more efficient. It is about making your job cuts fast and not caring who gets hurt, and this strike is about selling off government jobs to the private sector because of your ideology and it's about being able to make a profit while you do that. This strike is certainly about what is fair and reasonable.

Premier, you are all set for a massive privatization of public sector jobs, whether it is in the public interest or not. You are going to make that fire sale more appealing to the private sector by offering them a pool of cheap labour, labour that has no protection because you stripped these employees of their successor rights. Where is the fairness in literally selling your employees to the private sector as a cheap source of labour?

Hon Mr Harris: I would like to make a couple of comments, if I might, on the context of the question. First of all, this government is committed to privatizing nothing—absolutely nothing. We have clearly gone on the record saying that what we think has to happen when you have 10 years cumulatively of Liberals and NDP running up \$10-billion deficits—it might interest you to know, Mr Speaker, that today the per capita deficit in Ontario is higher than even the federal government per capita deficit after their latest projections. This is what we inherited.

What we committed to do was to look at government's role, what is the most effective way, the most efficient way—

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): Why borrow money for the tax cut? You've got to be crazy to be borrowing money for the tax cut.

The Speaker: The member for Oakwood.

Hon Mr Harris: —to deliver the best-quality services for the best price.

If that means that some things would be better left to the private sector, we're prepared to study that. We've indicated a number of areas where we're looking at that. If, on the other hand, it can be proven that the public sector can deliver better quality for a better price, we're all for that. You see, we're not for any ideology that

government has to do everything. We're not for any ideology that it has to be this union that delivers this service, or this crown corporation. In fact, we're for the taxpayers and we're for the citizens of Ontario: best quality, best price.

1410

Mrs McLeod: There is nothing I might like better, other than a resolution to the strike, than to see this government's privatization plans. Then we might have some idea of just how many of those 27,000 jobs are about to be lost in the next two years. But Premier, that was not my question.

My question is about, where is the fairness for your employees when you do privatize their jobs? I say to you there has been no fairness at all in what you and your government have put on the table for these employees during these negotiations. I say to you there was no fairness at all in the preparations you made deliberately for this strike using your legislative bullying powers to strip away first successor rights and then pension rights in Bill 26, Premier, you may remember, when you took away the rights of your employees to fair treatment on pensions that any other employee in any other sector, public or private, would have.

Premier, I hope you know that under your proposals it is now possible, for example, for a 55-year-old employee who has 22 years' experience in government service, who is three years away from retirement, to lose his job under your layoff provisions, and to lose his right, at the same time, to continue to make contributions towards a full pension, that full pension he's worked towards for some 22 years. Premier, where is the fairness in that?

Hon Mr Harris: I have to tell you that I believe, as does our cabinet, as does our caucus, as does the vast majority of Ontarians, that nobody has been fairer than the Chair of Management Board, Dave Johnson, in dealing with the employees of the province.

In reaching our ultimate goal of significantly lower unemployment, of significantly more jobs, of competitive tax rates, of Ontario becoming known as a friendly jurisdiction to invest and create jobs, and our ultimate long-term plan, to deliver services efficiently and effectively, we up front acknowledged that the public sector would be downsized. We publicly acknowledged that pre-campaign, during the campaign and post-campaign.

The challenge, then, is to be fair, to be compassionate, to be generous. By any measure, including the settlement we have tentatively reached with AMAPCEO, with offering severance benefits far in excess of any of those in the private sector who have lost their jobs, who are paying the taxes to support this \$1 million an hour more going out than we get in, Dave Johnson, representing the government, has been more than fair, in putting forth, given our financial situation, an increase—if you can believe that with a \$10-billion deficit—in the total package that was put there. While we can't talk about the details of negotiations right now, that is a matter of public record, as is the fairness of our position and our negotiating position and our negotiator.

Mrs McLeod: How can this Premier talk about fairness and compassion?

Laughter.

Mrs McLeod: The members on the government benches may laugh at this, but I can tell you that the people out there on picket lines are people with families and homes and mortgages to pay. They're people who worry about their jobs. They're people who worry about what's going to happen not just to them, but to their colleagues when some 27,000 of them get laid off in the next two years because this government wants to move so fast to deliver its tax cut.

I ask the Premier, where is the fairness, before negotiations ever begin, in taking away successor rights, in taking away the right to contribute to your pension, in taking away even the right to arbitration? Where is the fairness, when you sit down at the negotiating table, in saying that the people whose job you sell to the private sector won't even get your generous severance offer, and that senior person won't get a chance to keep his job and work towards his pension while a more junior person could hang on to his because it is a management right to keep that junior person in his job? Where's the fairness in all of that from a government that is ready to lay off as many as 27,000 people?

Premier, this strike could have been ended much earlier. In fact, this strike didn't need to take place if there was any interest on your part or the part of your government in what was fair and reasonable. If your goal, Premier, was to reduce the size of the public service by 13,000 positions, as you said it was during the election campaign, you could have done that and you could have done it through attrition.

The Speaker: Put your question.

Mrs McLeod: You could have done that through the natural process of attrition and get to your goal long before you have any plans to balance your budget. But this strike is not about fairness. It is about a bullying government that wants the maximum flexibility to do whatever it wants to do when it wants to do it and how it wants to do it, and it doesn't care who gets hurt.

The Speaker: Are you putting your question?

Mrs McLeod: Premier, is it not true that this has nothing to do with making a fair and reasonable offer to your employees? It is just your government carrying out its very deliberate plans and driving a steamroller over anyone or anything in its path.

The Speaker: The question has been asked.

Hon Mr Harris: No. As with most of the statements you make, it's not true. You ask me, is it not true? It is not true. Not only that, a lot of the statements—the 27,000 figure, the other figures thrown out by the Leader of the Opposition—are not only not true, they are irresponsible and they're not productive in the middle of these negotiations.

We talked about offering double severance from what was there from the NDP; we talked about offering pension bridges; we talked about committing the employer to make reasonable efforts; we talked about, in the final offer, a cost of \$150 million to \$200 million to the beleaguered taxpayers, deficit-ridden Ontarians, of the mess that we inherited. That, we believe, is fair and generous.

The Leader of the Opposition said, "Why don't you use attrition?" Well, we will use attrition and we will use

retirement packages and we will use incentives. But I'm going to tell you that it would have been—

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): You can't do it in two years.

Hon Mr Harris: We can't do it in two years. That's right. And do you know why we can't do it in two years? Because of the irresponsibility, particularly between 1980 and 1985.

Let me ask you this: Does it sound like attrition? You hired 8,000 people; 8,000 you hired. We had a chance to use attrition from 1980 to 1985. Had the Liberals particularly not been so irresponsible, we wouldn't be in this mess today. Even the NDP might have been able to handle it.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE PENSIONS

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I didn't realize the Premier felt that way about the Davis government.

I have a question for the Premier. In light of the comments the Premier has just made in answer to the questions from the Leader of the Opposition re the fact that the government, as he says, is not committed to privatization at this point, that the government wants a fair settlement and is trying to be fair, why has this government provoked this strike? Why did you take the approach of bringing legislation before the House last fall that stripped workers of their pension rights in Bill 26 and their successor rights in Bill 7? The people who are facing loss of jobs no longer have any opportunity and protections that people in the private sector have.

Recognizing the fact that this would not cost the government money and would be seen as a substantive move, is the government prepared, in the attempt to reach a settlement and to bring an end to this dispute, to restore successor rights to the workers who are out there on the picket line? We're not talking about numbers. We're talking about people and their families who provide services to the people of this province. Are you prepared now to say that you will restore successor rights to the people who are out there on the picket line?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): As the newly elected leader of the New Democratic Party has indicated—and let me offer my congratulations for his position—as he pointed out, and I will correct the record, as it is my right to do and I'd like to do that, it was 1985 to 1990 when the Liberals added 8,000 employees.

1420

In response to the leader of the New Democratic Party, I want to be very clear. There's been a lot of talk bandied about about pensions, or stripping of pensions or using these kinds of words. I want to reiterate, and I think that the public clearly needs to understand, that the members of OPSEU, the members of AMAPCEO, every employee working for the government of Ontario is privy to a defined-benefit, fully indexed pension plan and there is absolutely nothing in legislation or negotiations that takes a cent away from that.

Mr Wildman: The Premier did not respond to the specific question I raised, which was the issue of successor rights. The fact is, if the government is not committed to privatization, why on earth did you bring in

Bill 7 in the first place? And are you prepared now, since it will not cost the government and the taxpayers anything, to move and to restore successor rights, or are you determined to have the people out on the picket line and to have a confrontation instead of a settlement?

Hon Mr Harris: Now that we've settled that intact and in place is one of the most generous, fully indexed, defined-benefit plans that compares with all the other provinces and the federal government—I just wanted to get that behind us, because that was in the preamble—in successor rights we have indicated we are not committed to privatization but we are not committed not to look at privatization. We've said that. We're committed to finding the most effective way to deliver the best quality services for the best price to the people of Ontario.

So we did make some changes. We did make some changes that had been brought in by previous administrations, paralleling the similar changes that were brought in by the Liberal government in Ottawa, that allowed it the flexibility and the opportunity to see, who are the best people? Is it the employees? Is it government? Is it perhaps the employees taking it over, giving them an option? Is it the private sector? Now we can do that, as can the federal government and other governments across the country.

Mr Wildman: Perhaps the Premier could explain, now that he has indicated privatization if necessary but not necessarily privatization, why it is that people in the public sector, employees of this government, should be treated differently than people who work in the private sector who do have successor rights. Why is it, if the government is truly interested in fairness, that it is taking this approach and determined to deny rights to these workers that other workers across the economy have?

Hon Mr Harris: I don't know if the member is suggesting that we change the legislation for the private sector so that we're all the same. We're prepared, actually, to take a look at that. We're prepared to take a look at that, now the leader of the New Democratic Party has suggested that that's what perhaps we should do.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Oh, get off it. Take this seriously. This is about people's lives. It's about families.

Hon Mr Harris: Well, now the potential leader, used to be leader, leader, leader of the day, wannabe leader, interjects, "Be serious." You measure fairness. What's in the private sector? What's in the public sector?

Ms Lankin: Everything is a joke to you. It's not a joke to the people out there on the picket lines. It's not a joke when they can't pay their mortgages.

Hon Mr Harris: The point of the matter, I guess, from the interventions from the member for Beaches-Woodbine, is that the public sector's not the same as the private sector, and she's right. It's not the same.

We actually inherited a \$100-billion deficit. In the private sector, they're bankrupt, out of business, nobody has a job or any protection because that was it. We are a little different. In the public sector, if they run a million dollars an hour more money going out than comes in, they're bankrupt, no jobs, everybody loses their job. So we are a little different.

In the public sector, if they run \$1 million an hour more money going out than comes in, they're bankrupt; no jobs; everybody loses their job. So we are a little different.

I've got to tell you something else. After the last five years of the NDP government, we're very different in the public sector and it's a heck of a mess to clean up, but we're doing our best.

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): It's exactly that kind of flippant, arrogant response that is going to make it very difficult to get a settlement in this dispute.

The Premier knows full well that I was not suggesting that private sector workers should be denied rights. He knows full well that what I was suggesting was that public sector workers be treated fairly. The Premier goes on to say that this is about cutting the deficit and resolving the problems of the deficit, when in fact we know that the level of the cuts in the public sector that he's talking about are related to a tax cut that is not going to produce anything in terms of economic development in this province.

The finance committee report that you announced today, Mr Speaker, indicated to all of us here and to the public that every expert who appeared before the committee said the tax cut would be taking money out of the economy and would not restore the economy as the government intends.

Can the Premier explain why he is so determined to go ahead with this tax cut when every credible witness before the committee said that it would take money out of the economy, would harm the Ontario economy, not do what this government claims it would do?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): The cost of the tax cut is this: It will take us five years to balance the budget instead of three years, as you campaigned on. That is the cost of the tax cut. Now, what are the advantages of the tax cut?

You campaigned on no tax cut, "We're going to carry on the highest taxes virtually, among the highest in North America." You campaigned on that and you said you could balance the budget in three years. You might be able to do that. If you're prepared to make the same kind of reductions we are, you might be able to do that. But the penalty for it is over 10% unemployment, 1.3 million on welfare, \$10-billion deficits, a \$100-billion deficit overall, a whole litany and tyranny of unemployment, of loss of hope.

So we believe very strongly that just as your tax hikes killed jobs, destroyed jobs, ruined the Ontario economy, that we're better to wait five years to balance the budget and have lower unemployment, over 725,000 new jobs, fewer people dependent upon welfare. The price is prosperity and jobs for Ontario. We think it's a pretty good price.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): I'd like to restore order in the Legislature. Could I restore some order, please.

Mr Wildman: The Premier has said that the purpose of this is to produce 725,000 new jobs. Can he please explain how laying off somewhere between a little more than what the Liberals promised or up to 27,000 from the public sector plus the teachers, perhaps as many as 15,000 teachers are going to be out of work, the hospital workers and all of the municipal workers across the province because cuts in your transfer payments—how is that going to add to consumer confidence? How is that going to produce more spending that will stimulate the private sector? Can the Premier please explain how it is that this tax cut is going to produce consumer spending when in fact in order to do it he's putting thousands of people out of work in this province?

Hon Mr Harris: I think the member knows quite well that the spending reductions called for by his party and the Liberal Party and our party were to deal with the deficit. That was to deal with the \$10 billion of spending each year that we didn't have or the million dollars an hour we didn't have.

Then you had some stimulative programs, "tax more, government spend," to try and create jobs. They were an unmitigated disaster, a job-killing failure, so we are scrapping those programs.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Beaches-Woodbine is out of order.

1430

Hon Mr Harris: Everybody knows by delivering services more efficiently, more effectively, in conjunction with having a more competitive, regulatory and tax climate, we will create far more jobs in the private sector than are lost in the public sector. Clearly, some will be lost in the public sector. Many more will be created in the private sector. It's already working today. We are on track for over 725,000 jobs, and by the time we go back to the people, we will exceed it.

Mr Wildman: There is absolutely no evidence for what the Premier just asserted. There is absolutely no evidence that there has been stimulation in the economy today as a result of the policies of this government.

Can the Premier please explain why he is prepared to stand by this promise of a 30% tax cut, even when he recognizes that the experts before the committee made it very clear that the cuts in public services and expenditures will result in less consumer confidence in the economy, not more?

Hon Mr Harris: The reductions in the public sector—I guess maybe when we campaigned we were the only party that acknowledged there's a drag on the economy when you do that. But then there's a plus for balancing the books and getting your affairs in order that are there, you see.

We acknowledge that. It is the stimulative effects of electing a Progressive Conservative investment climate here in Ontario—tax reductions, a more competitive regulatory climate—that will create the private sector jobs. So how are we doing?

Here's how we're doing. Over the last six months, Ontario has gained 76,000 jobs, net. Employment rose by 31,000 in February. We're on track the last six months: 13,000 jobs a month. Our projections—our own govern-

ment projections—are 81,000 net new jobs in 1996, 100,000 in 1997. Data resources, if you want independent data, say 150,000 in 1997. On that track, we're in excess of 725,000 jobs over the next five years.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE DISPUTE

Mr Joseph Cordiano (Lawrence): It's obvious that the Premier wants to look like this fair guy, and his Chair of Management Board certainly has that look of fairness. I can tell that you when you scratch beneath the surface, there is no fairness there.

My question is for the Premier. Premier, the daily commerce of the province is steadily and daily being slowed down: Potential home buyers are being hurt by the slowdown in land registries; small meat processors may be faced with bankruptcy; birth registry and renewal are slowing to a crawl. How in the world can a poisoned labour climate, in addition to all of that, help attract more investment to Ontario? I ask you, Premier, when will you put the public interest ahead of your own narrow political interest and start negotiating in good faith?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I know the Chair of Management Board does that every day, and he'd be pleased to answer the question.

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I'd be pleased to indicate to the member for Lawrence that the government has been negotiating through this whole piece in a fair and reasonable way. We put an offer on the table in the first instance, a final offer, involving an increase in compensation of between \$150 million and \$200 million.

Most of the people I talked to in the province of Ontario feel that is a fair and reasonable amount. As a matter of fact, I would say that to some degree we are getting criticism, that some people feel that's too much money that we're putting on the table, but we have looked in other areas as well. We've looked at severance payments for those who will be leaving, doubling the severance payments. We've looked at pension-bridging mechanisms. As a matter of fact, we've looked at restoring the social contract, so the take-home pay of the members will be increased, which was taken away by the previous government. So there'll be about a 2% increase in compensation, total take-home pay to the members, plus the merit increases will click back in. So this government has put a number of different proposals on the table in an effort to be fair and reasonable to the employees of the province of Ontario.

Mr Cordiano: It's obvious that this government has used every chance it has, including the strike, to drive a wedge with the people of Ontario between the rich and the poor, to have a division between the employed and the unemployed, workers and management. When will this government realize that the people of Ontario want fairness, not more division, not more conflict, not more alienation—fairness. When will you get back to the negotiating table with fairness in mind, Mr Minister?

Hon David Johnson: We are at the table in the sense that the mediator is very actively negotiating between the two parties. The blackout, of course, is in place so I can't give you any details of anything that's taken place under

the blackout. Fairness is what we are trying to achieve: fairness for the employees, fairness for the taxpayers, fairness for the citizens of Ontario in that we need to restructure this government to be able to do better with less, to be able to deliver the services to the people of the province of Ontario. That's what we're trying to achieve.

I might say that in an effort to kickstart that, we put forward on Tuesday of last week amendments to our proposals, such as the job-matching scheme which would include a further element of fairness, and that's I think why we were in active negotiations over the last weekend. So I'll assure the member one more time that we are attempting to be fair to all concerned: to the employees, but also to the taxpayers.

TERMINATION AND SEVERANCE PAYMENTS

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question to the Premier. In light of his comments and the comments of his colleague the Chair of Management Board, and the determination, it appears, of the government to make these cuts to help to finance the tax cut, could we refer to your promises in the campaign. In the campaign, you said your plans included \$600 million for severance payments. Now, apparently in the negotiations you're saying you can only afford \$150 million to \$200 million in the OPSEU agreement. You also said in the document the Common Sense Revolution that, "Where possible we'll make reductions through attrition and retirement packages." Why are you breaking this promise and why are you not prepared to meet the commitment you made of \$600 million in the campaign?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): The commitments that were quoted in the Common Sense Revolution will be met or exceeded.

Mr Wildman: Does that then mean that the commitment for \$600 million to finance severance packages is again on the table?

Hon Mr Harris: The commitments that have just been repeated in the supplementary, as well as the commitments in the question, as well as those commitments dealing with downsizing in the Common Sense Revolution, will be met or exceeded.

MEAT PROCESSING PLANTS

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): My question is for the Chair of Management Board of Cabinet. As members know, the ongoing strike of the civil service union is creating severe hardship for the owners and employees of provincially inspected meat processing plants. Virtually no meat is being processed in provincially inspected plants at the present time and many of these businesses are in very deep trouble because for the past three weeks they've been unable to operate and serve their customers. In recent days I've heard from a number of my constituents who are affected by this strike and I view the present situation as being totally unacceptable. Can the minister advise the House of what actions the government is taking to resolve this problem?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): The government is concerned about this situation. It's unfortunate because there are some 300

small meat processing plants across the province of Ontario. They are small business people. They struggle. They work hard to make a living and this government is very concerned about them. I will say that they employ a great number of people across the province of Ontario and unfortunately—those employees are important—as a result of this strike the plants have essentially been closed down. There are about 2,000 people who have been put out of work and I'm very concerned about that.

The government took this matter of the Ontario Labour Relations Board last week. The government feels that these meat processors should be in operation. The union's position is that the services are not essential. The government's view is that the services are essential and the government wished to have essential service workers so that the plants could be opened. But the labour relations board has ruled against the government and ruled that the meat inspectors should not be essential, and unfortunately, as a result, the plants are closed down.

1440

Mr Arnott: I want to thank the minister for the actions he has taken to date, but we must acknowledge that in spite of the government's best efforts the problem is not yet solved. There's a concern that some processors, in desperation to save their businesses and their livelihoods, may process illegally and unsafe meat may reach the supermarket counter. What assurances can the minister provide the House that the meat being sold in Ontario is safe for people to eat?

Hon David Johnson: Again to the member for Wellington, we will certainly be continuing to monitor this situation. It's not a situation that we're happy with. I'll assure you that we would immediately negotiate with the union in terms of having essential service workers in these plants so that they could operate, so that they could process meat properly, so that there would be no danger at all to the health and safety of the people of the province of Ontario.

The government is continuing to collect evidence. To the degree that there's evidence that would support a further review by the Ontario Labour Relations Board, I'll assure you that we will be more than willing to go back to the Ontario Labour Relations Board to rectify this matter. Of course, the government is continuing to negotiate on a broader scale, and if we can reach an agreement on a basis that's fair and reasonable to the taxpayers as well as to the employees, then this whole matter will be resolved as well.

SPENDING REDUCTIONS

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Premier and it has to do with the OPSEU strike and how the government is dealing with the OPSEU members.

The Premier will remember that during the campaign his document on the Common Sense Revolution said, "We will trim the cost of the direct provincial government workforce by 15%, the equivalent of some 13,000 employees, returning the system to the approximate size it was in 1985." That was your first promise; you would return it to 1985 levels. We've heard today, however, that

we're actually already at the 1985 level. The Ontario public service already is at the 1985 level.

The second thing we've heard is this—and my leader pointed this out. These weren't her numbers, these are your numbers, Premier. You have said that you are going to cut the payroll by one third, 33%. That's how much money you're going to cut out of the Ontario payroll. Because OPSEU is essentially two thirds—or actually three quarters—of the payroll, we can only assume that when you're cutting the payroll by 33%, you are going to cut 33% of the jobs.

My question is this: Knowing what OPSEU is facing at the table, can you confirm that you have changed your commitment from the campaign? You are no longer committed to returning it to 1985 levels, but you are planning to reduce it at least 20,000 and perhaps as much as 27,000 jobs below the 1985 levels?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the Chairman of Management Board—

Interjections.

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I can confirm that this government is committed to its Common Sense Revolution approach, that we will downsize and restructure the government to deliver better with less.

In terms of the job count, at this point it's all speculation. The 13,000 is the number that was contained in the Common Sense Revolution, but the ministries are looking at their business plans, the ministries are looking at their estimates procedures, and this will all become clear over the next couple of months in terms of what will be required to deliver the services in the province of Ontario in a manner consistent with what we said would happen in the Common Sense Revolution. The people of Ontario are expecting us to downsize, restructure and do better, and that's exactly what we're going to do.

Mr Phillips: I think you begin to see the problem OPSEU faces trying to deal with this government. You have said publicly you are going to cut one third of the cost of the payroll out of the budget. Those are your own numbers, and the Premier's shaking his head. You have said that. You said that publicly and you said that in private briefings. That's what OPSEU is facing, a government that is trying to hide the facts from the public. You said you're going to cut one third out. In the campaign you said we were going to return to the 1985 levels. You've already broken that promise. You've already said you're going to get at least 13,000 below it.

I want you today to confirm that you have said you are going to cut one third—it's in your own document, right here—of the payroll out. If it does not come from jobs, where in the world else are you going to cut payroll, Mr Chairman of Management Board?

Hon David Johnson: What I announced in the Legislature last fall was that the operating and administrative expenses of the province of Ontario in those areas that were not exempted such as health and classroom education etc, those areas would be reduced by about 33% over two years. That was clear.

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): You stuck to that one.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon David Johnson: Mr Speaker, if I'm allowed to respond.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Hamilton East is out of order.

Hon David Johnson: There are a number of ways of reducing administrative expenses. For example, you will see quite a lowering in terms of the cost of property leases of the province of Ontario.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): That's not payroll. He's talking payroll numbers. Answer the question.

Hon David Johnson: Well, I'm telling the member opposite the commitment this government made, and the commitment this government made was to reduce operating and administrative expenses. That will be accomplished through reduction in lease costs, through consolidation, for example, of computer leases—in many, many different ways. Yes, there will be reduction in the payroll costs as well. All taken together, that will be one third, roughly, over a couple of years, of the expenses that have not been exempted.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I have a question for the Minister of Health. It seems as though I need to remind him of a commitment in the infamous Common Sense Revolution, a commitment that is worded as follows: "We will not cut health care spending."

Outside on the picket lines today there are many, many health care workers, because they know that after you've finished savaging OPSEU, they're next on the line. They know that. You've already broken a promise that you would not cut health care. They know that the promise in the Common Sense Revolution is at best a sham and at worst an outright lie. There have been thousands and thousands of layoff notices already issued by hospitals. Anybody with an ounce of sense knows you cannot effect those levels of layoffs without affecting the level of services in the health care system.

At the Toronto General Hospital there have been 1,300 workers already receive layoff notices. At the Parry Sound hospital, every health care worker in the hospital below the level of chief executive officer has received a layoff notice. In Hamilton Centre, St Peter's Hospital has already notified 230 people of layoff. And as a matter of fact, St Joseph's Hospital will be closed and there will be up to 4,500 jobs there.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Put your question.

Mr Laughren: I'm asking the Minister of Health, will he finally lay to rest that big lie in the Common Sense Revolution and admit there are going to be cuts to the health care system?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): Perhaps the record of this government speaks for itself in the area of health care. The budget was \$17.4 billion when we arrived in office. It's \$17.4 billion today. It will be \$17.4 billion when we go into the next election.

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member's out of order. Sit down. You're out of order.

Hon Mr Wilson: Yes, the Minister of Finance, in his November statement, made it clear that \$1.3 billion will be the amount of money reduced in transfers to hospitals over the next three years. I know the honourable member told the Ontario Hospital Association that he agreed with hospital restructuring. That's the money we anticipate will come out of hospitals.

Unlike other governments, when we actually see that money—and don't forget, those fiscal years haven't even started yet and we've already made investments in kidney dialysis and paramedics and ambulance services around the province and a 20% increase in cardiac surgeries, and we've not seen one penny of hospital restructuring savings. When we see the savings, though, that money over the next few years of the government will also be reinvested into health care, into long-term-care services, into things that his community needs, and the envelope sealed at \$17.4 billion. I don't understand how you can't get that through your heads and understand that is a sealed, protected envelope as per our campaign promises.

1450

Mr Laughren: That response would be laughable if it wasn't so serious. The minister knows he's already cut the money out of the hospital budgets before the restructuring has taken place. He knows that full well. As a matter of fact, his own government, his own ministry, through the health sector training and adjustment program, has announced for the year 1996-97 that there'll be the following layoffs in the hospital sector in the province: for Metro Toronto, 2,550; for the northeast of the province, 350; the northwest, 65; eastern Ontario, 820; the southwest, 1,315; central west, 460; central east, 175 people. Those are layoffs that are coming, according to his own ministry, this year in the hospital sector, and he wants us to believe that will not affect services and that does not represent a reduction in funding to the health care sector.

So I'm asking the Minister of Health to do two things: to convince his colleagues that the tax cut must not go and that that money be used to maintain spending in the health care sector and to get the deficit down.

Hon Mr Wilson: The honourable member was the Treasurer of a government that closed over 6,000 hospital beds during the five years that you were in office. The only thing you forgot to do, I say to the honourable member, was to actually reduce the overhead costs. On a proportional basis, Ontarians pay today more for bricks and mortar than we do for actual services in those hospitals compared to other provinces and other health care systems, and that's a real shame. So everyone, I say to the honourable member, in the health care sector agrees with restructuring, and all three political parties here.

Yes, there will be a dislocation of jobs in the hospital sector. We will see a beefing up of services and an increasing number of jobs created in the long-term-care sector. We know that adjustment policies have to be in place. One of the Health Services Restructuring Commission's first priorities is to establish that human resources plan. The remnants of the plan that the NDP left—they

spent tens of millions of dollars studying this problem but didn't have the courage to move forward and do the restructuring—did put in place the health sector training and adjustment program. That money is still there and that money will be available to help retrain people so they'll get jobs, the new jobs in health care that aren't necessarily in the old hospitals but in the community.

We'll see an increase of health care services in the province. In fact, all of the studies to date, some 33 coming into the ministry, indicate we will have better health care services—highest quality, best price—and it's a pretty exciting time in health care in the province.

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): My question is to the Solicitor General. Ontarians across the province are deeply concerned about the rise in the number of crimes committed by youths in our society today. Criminal habits developed by these young people may stay with them all their lives, with long-term costs to themselves and to the people of Ontario as a whole. While our party was in opposition, we advocated getting tougher on young offenders. Recently the Solicitor General announced the formation of a Strict Discipline Task Force. I would like to ask the Solicitor General, what progress has been made in this area since the creation of the task force?

Hon Bob Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I thank the member for the question. I know there have been a number of incidents in her own riding in the last little while with respect to young offender crime and I appreciate the concern of her constituents which she is voicing in the Legislature today.

When our party was in opposition, we toured the province listening to people with respect to concerns related to the justice field. One concern is in the young offender area. We have acted upon that concern as a government. We're limited significantly in what we can do because, as members are aware, the Young Offenders Act is a federal piece of legislation. But we are moving in the strict discipline area. We have established a task force which will be reporting back by mid-April and we hope to move very quickly in this area this year. They have met with over 40 stakeholders, they have visited a number of young offender facilities in Ontario and have also visited Manitoba to take a look at the strict discipline program in Manitoba.

I can indicate to the member and to members of the House that we will move quickly with respect to implementing the recommendations of the task force. We see a strict discipline facility, at least one, perhaps more, in establishment before the end of the calendar year and certainly the implementation of strict discipline programming throughout the young offender system in Ontario.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): I move that

notwithstanding standing orders 8(a) and 96(a), the House will not meet on the morning of Thursday, March 21, 1996, to consider private members' public business; and that notwithstanding standing order 96(h), the requirement for notice be waived with respect to ballot items 15, 16, 17 and 18.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Agreed? Agreed.

ESTIMATES

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I think you will find there's unanimous consent to consider the estimates concurrences together and to defer all votes to the end of the six hours allotted for estimates concurrences.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Is it agreed? It is agreed.

PETITIONS

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): It's my privilege today to add another 3,200 signatures, which now makes it I believe in excess of 11,000 signatures collected by Rose Kulimouski and Mae Mussolum with regard to cuts in health care. I will dispense with the reading of the petition, but it is addressed to the Legislative Assembly and I'll file that with the clerk.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): "Whereas the Ontario government plans to sell off public services to corporations which will run them for profit; and

"Whereas corporate takeover will be strictly user-pay for services we now depend on; and

"Whereas our clean air and water standards and worker safety rules are being relaxed because corporations don't like rules that interfere with profits; and

"Whereas privatization is being sold as a way to save tax dollars, even though large companies pay little or no taxes while individual Canadians pay most of the total tax bill; and

"Whereas Bill 7 was introduced in the interests of facilitating its privatization agenda by stripping public sector workers of their rights to retain fair working conditions when services are transferred or privatized;

"We, the following citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to abandon the sell-off of Ontario public services and reinstate successor rights for public service employees."

I'm affixing my name to this petition.

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, request that the Legislature of Ontario not approve any tax cuts until the causes of

poverty and unemployment in Ontario are dealt with efficiently and until the province's debt and deficit are paid down."

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): To the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Bill 26 exempts the government as an employer from key legislation governing pensions in Ontario; and

"Whereas employees of the Ontario government have been stripped of their right to access pension security, a right that other workers in Ontario have; and

"Whereas this represents the theft of hundreds of millions of dollars in pension benefits from working people; and

"Whereas as a result thousands of workers who face being laid off in the coming months could be forced into poverty;

"We, the following undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to reinstate the rights removed by schedule L of Bill 26."

I hereby affix my signature.

1500

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): To the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the members of the Ontario public service are earnestly attempting to negotiate an equitable and respectful collective agreement with the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas a fair collective agreement is evidence of this government's respect for Ontario's public services, the workers who provide them and those who need them; and

"Whereas by introducing Bill 7 and Bill 26 prior to commencing negotiations, the government removed significant rights from OPSEU members that other workers in Ontario retain; and

"Whereas reducing the size of the civil service can be achieved through attrition, without attacking basic rights and dignities of hard-working people;

"We, the following undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to negotiate responsibly and in good faith with the Ontario Public Service Employees Union towards a fair and respectful collective agreement."

This is signed by more than 70 people, and I'm proud to affix my signature.

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): By coincidence, this is a petition from the member for Simcoe East.

"We, the undersigned, request that the Legislature of Ontario not approve any tax cuts until the causes of poverty and unemployment in Ontario are dealt with

effectively and until the province's debt and deficit are paid down."

It's signed by some 21 persons. It appears to be in order.

OMNIBUS LEGISLATION

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): My petition reads as follows:

"Whereas the Minister of Health is given full power to close or amalgamate hospitals and to terminate services that individual hospitals provide; and

"Whereas the Minister of Health is given the power to take over the operation of a community hospital by appointing a hospital supervisor who will have all the powers of the hospital board; and

"Whereas \$225 million in new user fees under the Ontario drug benefit program will be imposed on seniors and others most in need; and

"Whereas drug costs under the Ontario drug benefit program will no longer be regulated, leading to sharp increases in the price of prescription drugs; and

"Whereas the Minister of Health is given the power to unilaterally remove health care services from OHIP coverage, meaning these services will have to be paid for by the public; and

"Whereas the government is given the power to unilaterally close down the public service pension plan and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union pension plan; and

"Whereas Bill 26 restricts access to freedom of information requests by implementing new fees and providing greater powers to the government to keep files secret;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to withdraw Mike Harris's undemocratic omnibus Bill 26."

I affix my signature to this petition as I agree with it.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have a petition from people who are very concerned about the treatment by this government to workers.

To the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the members of the Ontario public service are earnestly attempting to negotiate an equitable and respectful collective agreement with the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas a fair collective agreement is evidence of this government's respect for Ontario's public services, the workers who provide them and those who need them; and

"Whereas by introducing Bill 7 and Bill 26 prior to commencing negotiations, the government removed significant rights from OPSEU members that other workers in Ontario retain; and

"Whereas reducing the size of the civil service can be achieved through attrition, without attacking basic rights and dignities of hard-working people,

"We, the following undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to negotiate reasonably and in good faith with the Ontario Public

Service Employees Union towards a fair and respectful collective agreement."

I agree with this petition and I will affix my signature to it.

TORONTO BEACHES

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): Pleading with this government to do what the former Liberal and NDP governments would not do—that is, to help restore clean water and clean beaches to west Toronto—I present to the Parliament of Ontario a petition signed by thousands of residents of Parkdale and High Park and York South asking the government to give speedy approval to the construction of the western beaches tunnel, which will make a major contribution to the improvement of our environment, improve water quality, create thousands of construction jobs and return our western beaches to safe, pristine conditions for our children and our future.

I proudly affix my signature.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): "Whereas the members of the Ontario public service are earnestly attempting to negotiate an equitable and respectful collective agreement with the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas a fair collective agreement is evidence of this government's respect for Ontario's public services, the workers who provide them and those who need them; and

"Whereas by introducing Bill 7 and Bill 26 prior to commencing negotiations, the government removed significant rights from OPSEU members that other workers in Ontario retain; and

"Whereas reducing the size of the civil service can be achieved through attrition without attacking basic rights and dignities of hardworking people;

"We, the following undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to negotiate responsibly and in good faith with the Ontario public service employees union towards a fair and respectful collective agreement."

I affix my signature along with the hundreds of others who have signed this petition and submit it to the House today.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I have a petition to the Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government plans to sell off public services to corporations who will run them for profit; and

"Whereas after the corporate takeover it will be strictly user-pay for services we now depend on; and

"Whereas our clean air and water standards and worker safety rules are being relaxed because corporations don't like the rules that interfere with profits; and

"Whereas privatization is being sold as a way to save tax dollars, even though large companies pay little or no taxes while individual Canadians pay most of the total tax bill; and

"Whereas Bill 7 was introduced in the interests of facilitating the privatization of the agenda of the government by stripping public sector workers of their rights to retain fair working conditions when services are transferred or privatized;

"We, the following citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to abandon the sell-off of Ontario's public services and to reinstate successor rights for public service employees."

I agree with the petitioners and I affix my signature to this petition.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): I have a petition dealing with Ipperwash Provincial Park and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Ipperwash Provincial Park was occupied by aboriginal persons on September 5, 1995; and

"Whereas there has been considerable property damage resulting from this occupation; and

"Whereas there is speculation of a possible burial site on this deeded property;

"We, the undersigned residents"—and there are 5,000 of them—"of Ontario petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) To undertake to reopen Ipperwash Provincial Park and restore the park for public use before the regular opening date of May 1996.

"(2) To ensure the integrity of all of our provincial parks to remain open for continued use for tourism and the enjoyment of the public.

"(3) To define the status of any burial site and protect any such site under the direction of the Cemeteries Act."

COMMUNITY-BASED JUSTICE OPTIONS

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas community-based justice programs such as diversion, alternative measures, community service orders, bail supervision etc have proven value; the screening and the supervision of accused and offenders within well-defined programs contribute to public safety; for over 20 years community-based options have made a positive contribution to the welfare of communities in Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"We believe that these programs must not be viewed as dispensable. As with many recent cuts, short-term fiscal expediency holds no long-term value. Credible links with the community and quality programs for the citizens of Ontario must be maintained."

I affix my name to this petition as well.

1510

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I also have petitions here in support of the OPSEU strikers.

To the honourable Lieutenant Government and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the members of the Ontario public service are earnestly attempting to negotiate an equitable and respectful collective agreement with the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas a fair collective agreement is evidence of this government's respect for Ontario's public services, the workers who provide them, and those who need them; and

"Whereas by introducing Bill 7 and Bill 26 prior to commencing negotiations the government removed significant rights from OPSEU members that other workers in Ontario retain; and

"Whereas reducing the size of the civil service can be achieved through attrition, without attacking basic rights and dignities of hardworking people;

"We, the following undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to negotiate responsibly and in good faith with the Ontario Public Service Employees Union towards a fair and respectful collective agreement."

I'm proud to affix my signature also.

LIQUOR CONTROL BOARD OF ONTARIO

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario is considering the privatization of the Liquor Control Board of Ontario,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liquor Control Board of Ontario remain a crown corporation because we fear that the privatization of that organization will lead to an increase in crime, drunk driving, alcohol abuse and its health costs as well as loss of control over availability to minors and the quality of product."

OMNIBUS LEGISLATION

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Minister of Health is given full power to close or amalgamate hospitals and to terminate services that individual hospitals provide; and

"Whereas the Minister of Health is given the power to take over the operation of a community hospital by appointing a hospital supervisor who will have all the powers of the hospital board; and

"Whereas \$225 million in new user fees under the Ontario drug benefit program will be imposed on seniors and others most in need; and

"Whereas drug costs under the Ontario drug benefit program will no longer be regulated, leading to sharp increases in the price of prescription drugs; and

"Whereas the Minister of Health is given the power to unilaterally remove health care services from OHIP coverage, meaning these services will have to be paid for by the public; and

"Whereas the government is given the power to unilaterally close down the public service pension plan and the Ontario Public Service Employees Union pension plan; and

"Whereas Bill 26 restricts access to freedom of information requests by implementing new fees and providing greater powers to the government to keep files secret,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to withdraw Mike Harris's undemocratic omnibus Bill 26."

Hundreds of people have signed this, and I proudly affix my signature to this petition.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ADMINISTRATION OF JUSTICE

Mr Martiniuk from the standing committee on administration of justice presented the following report and moved its adoption:

Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 19, An Act to repeal the Advocacy Act, 1992, revise the Consent to Treatment Act, 1992, amend the Substitute Decisions Act, 1992 and amend other Acts in respect of related matters / Projet de loi 19, Loi abrogeant la Loi de 1992 sur l'intervention, révisant la Loi de 1992 sur le consentement au traitement, modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur la prise de décisions au nom d'autrui et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui concerne des questions connexes.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Shall the report, as read, be adopted? Agreed.

Shall Bill 19 be ordered for third reading? Agreed.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Mr Gilchrist from the standing committee on resources development presented the following report and moved its adoption:

Your committee begs to report the following bill, as amended:

Bill 20, An Act to promote economic growth and protect the environment by streamlining the land use planning and development system through amendments related to planning, development, municipal and heritage matters / Projet de loi 20, Loi visant à promouvoir la croissance économique et à protéger l'environnement en rationalisant le système d'aménagement et de mise en valeur du territoire au moyen de modifications touchant des questions relatives à l'aménagement, la mise en valeur, les municipalités et le patrimoine.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Shall Bill 20 be ordered for third reading? Agreed.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Pursuant to the order of the House of December 14, 1995, Mr Laughren from the standing committee on government agencies presented the committee's fourth report.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Does the member wish to make a brief statement? No.

Pursuant to standing order 106(g)11, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Pursuant to the order of the House of November 16, 1995, Mr Curling presented a report from the standing committee on estimates.

Reading dispensed with.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

TOWN OF MILTON ACT, 1996

Mr Chudleigh moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr50, An Act respecting the Town of Milton.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

ASSOCIATION OF REGISTERED GRAPHIC DESIGNERS OF ONTARIO ACT, 1996

Mrs Marland moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr56, An Act respecting the Association of Registered Graphic Designers of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

1092040 ONTARIO INC ACT, 1996

Mr McGuinty moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr43, An Act to revive 1092040 Ontario Inc.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CONCURRENCE IN SUPPLY

Mr Eves moved concurrence in supply for the following ministries:

Ministry of Education and Training
Ministry of Education and Training, supplementary
Ministry of Community and Social Services
Ministry of Housing
Ministry of Transportation
Ministry of Transportation, supplementary
Ministry of Health
Ministry of Health, supplementary
Ministry of Economic Development and Trade

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I'm pleased to rise today to speak on the 1995-96 estimates. At the outset, though, I do believe it's important to note for everyone's information that the 1995-96 estimates that we're going to be discussing today reflect the previous government's way of doing business. This government is in the process of rebuilding the foundations of the province's fiscal and economic policy.

One of the issues we're debating is the Ministry of Housing's estimates, which were reviewed last month. One veteran member of the standing committee on estimates told our committee that landlords have failed, that he had failed when he was a landlord, that as a former Minister of Housing he had failed. He said, "We have not brought decent and affordable housing to the people of this province and we must fix that." He went on to say about this government's actions, "I commend you"—the government—"to looking with respect to fixing the rental housing aspect in our province."

Do you know who said that? It was the former Minister of Housing, Alvin Curling. And I couldn't agree more with Mr Curling on this issue. We need fundamental change in this policy area.

1520

We learned a great deal from the estimates process with respect to the Ministry of Housing. We learned that taxpayers are subsidizing non-profit units to the tune of some \$10,000 a year; that's this year and every year. If we had let this boondoggle continue, there would have been 132,000 units under subsidy by 1998-99. This would have cost the taxpayers of Ontario, the hardworking taxpayers of Ontario who are suffering under one of the highest tax burdens in North America, brought about by 65 successive tax increases—half from my friends in the Liberal caucus and half from my friends in the New Democratic Party—

Mr Robert Chiarelli (Ottawa West): How come you are reading your notes?

Mr Baird: My friend from Ottawa West will be pleased to note that I carried every poll—

Mr Chiarelli: They all go to Ottawa for the housing.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The member for Ottawa West will come to order.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I was trying to listen carefully to what the member said, and I wondered if he mentioned the 172 tax increases under the Progressive Conservative government previous to that. I didn't hear it. Did he say that or not?

Mr Baird: My friend from St Catharines can review Hansard and make note that I, on a number of occasions, said that government was certainly not perfect prior to 1985.

But going back to my friend from Ottawa West, he can take some pride in looking at every single co-op and non-profit housing project in my constituency, and I was elected by a plurality in every single one of them. I know my friend from Ottawa West will appreciate learning that.

These hardworking taxpayers are forced to pay a \$10,000 annual subsidy, each and every year, to these units. It's simply unsustainable. This would have cost the hardworking taxpayers of Ontario more than \$1 billion a year. Again, this is not just a \$1-billion, one-time cost. This is \$1 billion this year, next year, and forever. This simply is unsustainable to the taxpayers. If we continued with this type of spending strategy it would end Ontario in the bankruptcy court.

The non-profit program was a badly conceived and badly mismanaged project. Even the neutral Provincial Auditor would wholeheartedly agree with that statement.

The Provincial Auditor found huge discrepancies in the non-profit housing sector, such as unsatisfactory control to ensure that projects were built only where needed and at a competitive price. That would seem only logical to the people of Ontario that you build housing only where it's needed and when it's needed. But the Provincial Auditor found that there were unsatisfactory controls to ensure that basic concept was satisfied. Twenty-five per cent of the projects looked at by the auditor lacked approved operating budgets, something that's just absolutely outrageous.

It's that type of mismanagement that put this province at a competitive disadvantage. It's that type of mismanagement and excessive government spending that is the reason why this government has to take control of what is a very difficult situation. We can look at the roots of this problem in the Provincial Auditor's reports and in the way housing has been dealt with over the last five and 10 years particularly.

Mr Chiarelli: What about rent controls?

Mr Baird: The Provincial Auditor went on—and my friend from Ottawa West will be interested to know this—to note that project costs were going up despite large declines in land prices and construction costs. When construction costs went down, when land prices went down, it's only logical that the cost of building these non-profit units would go down. But regrettably, under the previous two administrations the Provincial Auditor found it actually went up, which is quite outrageous.

Finally, he noted that the average costs came in even higher than those at the peak of the housing boom in the late 1980s—last year and the year before, the non-profit housing projects were coming in even more than they were at that boom.

If you go around Ottawa-Carleton, my home community, you'd see that housing prices have fallen in each of the last three or four years. People who bought their homes in 1990-92 find that their homes are depreciably less. It would come as quite a shock to the hardworking taxpayer to note that even with this reality, even with the decline in housing costs, the government-owned and -operated and -constructed housing units were going up in price.

It's that type of mismanagement, it's that type of excessive spending that's put Ontario at a competitive disadvantage with our trading partners. It's put Ontario at a competitive disadvantage when dealing with job creation. It's why the tough actions, all designed to create jobs and hope and opportunity in Ontario, are needed. It's why we simply can't wait. At \$1 million an hour going into debt, we simply can't wait. We've got to take action. This government fully accepts the heavy responsibilities given to it by the people of Ontario to make such real change.

We had a very good debate during the election campaign. The government of the day put forward a very clear strategy on where they wanted to take the province. The current government put forward an equally clear strategy on the direction we'd like to take the province in. My friends in the official opposition put forward two very clear strategies on the directions they'd like to take the province in, and we learned about some of them in

question period when we heard that the civil service reductions proposed by the official opposition were only 1,000 less than the government's. That's something important to note. I've learned from my colleagues in the Liberal Party that they stand by the numbers; they stand by both of them.

I recall Bill 15, the reform to the Workers' Compensation Board. We learned that during the reign of the previous government, the Liberals were in favour of scrapping the Workplace Health and Safety Agency. Then we waited until after the election and they changed their minds. Now they like it. So they had one set of policies before the election and another set of policies after the election. Regrettably, my colleagues in the third party only have one set of policies.

The committee also heard from the Minister of Housing that the provincial government and his ministry were phasing out funding to a number of interest groups that the previous government funded. It's important to note that. People in my riding, in my constituency, feel very strongly that hard-earned tax dollars shouldn't be given to special-interest groups to lobby their own government to spend exceedingly more money. It's inflationary to simply say, "We'll give money to this group and not that group, and then this group will use that money to lobby us to spend even more money."

I suspect if you knocked on doors in the great city of St Catharines or in Ottawa West, you'd find that nine out of 10 would wholeheartedly agree with the concept that the government simply should not be funding special-interest groups. If interest groups truly represent the large constituencies they purport to represent, surely they could collect a very modest membership fee of as little as a few dollars to support that worthwhile cause they hope to represent.

The people of Ontario have solidly spoken in favour of the government getting out of the advocacy business, of the government getting out of the special-interest-group financing business. They believe the people of Ontario will make the very wise decision to support those groups which they choose to support, not those groups which the government of the day chooses to support through their hard-earned tax dollars. It's simply unsustainable. To ask taxpayers to fund special-interest groups is something that is simply abhorrent to the vast majority of hardworking people in the province of Ontario.

I'd also like to take a moment to point out some news that we learned in the deliberations of the committee with respect to the Ministry of Community and Social Services, something we were very concerned about. In reviewing the estimates, as each member does before the committee meets, you could go through and find large discrepancies, sometimes double-digit discrepancies, between what was budgeted and what was spent, what was estimated to be spent and then what in fact was spent.

There was one remarkable discovery that members of the committee made in the course of our deliberations on the estimates. Now, it would have been helpful had this House debated these estimates last year when these estimates were first drafted, but they didn't. They were being debated some 10 or 11 months too late, which I

think is something unfortunate. I think the most basic tenet of democracy is the 1:30 to 3 o'clock window where members of the cabinet are accountable to the citizens of Ontario, where the estimates could have been tabled in this House and referred to the appropriate committee. It's remarkable that the House didn't sit for a spring session last year, not even for the month and a half preceding the call of the election.

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I think the public was denied what we would call accountability on this side of the House, and that's very regrettable. In fact, in the last year they sat only a few weeks, which is simply not—

Mr Bradley: Twenty days.

Mr Baird: Twenty days, my colleague the member for St Catharines says. That simply is inappropriate. It speaks volumes to the degree of accountability that the previous government sought.

In the 1995-96 estimates of the Ministry of Community and Social Services, the government of the day, my colleagues in the third party, said that a program was in existence that would find \$611 million in savings from the Ministry of Community and Social Services—\$611 million would be saved. When my colleague the member for Nickel Belt presented his budget forecasts last year, this \$611 million was a budgeted saving, that they brought down the deficit by \$611 million.

In the estimates committee we noticed that this \$611 million hadn't been saved. When you go through the books—we saw some 11.3% discrepancy on that vote which we were all very concerned about, so we went to the estimates committee and we had the good fortune to have the minister spend a number of days with us to question him about that. Of course, this minister was there to answer questions on behalf of the previous government, so these figures weren't his. When we asked the minister why this program—this program designed for saving \$611 million, this program which got the deficit down \$611 million conveniently, just a week before the election was called—why this program saving hadn't been realized, we found out that the program was never implemented. We found out that the program they said existed never was implemented.

We were all very surprised, and it's no wonder that the deficit went up by such an incredible margin between the day of the calling of the election and the Minister of Finance's financial statement of July 21, 1995; it's no wonder there was a huge discrepancy. Here's \$611 million we found out about. Not even my colleague the member for Lake Nipigon could get away with that type of disappearance of saving plan.

We asked the minister, could he and his officials table the spending reduction program, their plan to save \$611 million, with the committee. To our great horror, when we requested such from a ministry official, a senior official at the ministry was able to report that the previous government, my friends opposite, had no plans to realize the \$611 million in savings. There simply weren't plans.

Is it any wonder that governments in this province brought in deficits over the last number of years of as high as \$10 billion, and that we have a \$100-billion

deficit in this province, when \$611 million just simply disappears in the estimates book, and that the government of the day would not call back the provincial Legislature for a spring session last year before the election was called so that these accounts and these estimates could be tabled with this Legislature, so they could have public review and scrutiny at the most relevant time, before the money had even begun to flow? I think it's a real disgrace that that never happened. In going on, we found that this \$611 million simply hadn't occurred.

I wonder over the last 10 and, to be fair, even 15 years, how many decisions like this were simply made: "We'll just say let the next generation pick up the bill. We'll just put a \$611-million accounting trick into the books and we'll let the next generation pay. We'll let the young people of this province take out a mortgage on their future and they'll pay the bill, because we simply don't have the courage of our convictions to stand up, to make the tough decisions," the tough decisions that the people of Ontario sent each and every member of this Legislature to address, and that's a great concern to us all.

I also would take note in this discussion of the report of the Provincial Auditor. He said in his report, "I'm pleased to note that the new government has taken action on many of our recommendations." The Provincial Auditor, a neutral third party of this House, is someone who has served admirably and well in the last number of years, someone who in the dark days of the previous government was the best friend the taxpayers of this province ever had, by the way.

He goes on to state that the government is finally accepting the advice by him and his officials at the Office of the Provincial Auditor that the government shouldn't keep two books. That's something that we on this side of the House in successive caucuses have spoken about for many years. I think that's something very important to note.

Having said that, I think the endorsement of the Provincial Auditor that this government is addressing and taking action on many of the recommendations that he has made in subsequent years is good news for the finances of the province of Ontario. That, coupled with addressing the real spending concerns in this province, I believe will create an environment that will encourage job creation, encourage investment, will encourage consumer confidence.

My colleagues opposite in the Liberal Party presented a plan during the election campaign with billions of dollars in tax cuts. They don't talk about that now. They were going to cut billions of dollars in taxes and balance the budget in four years. My colleagues in the third party had a plan to balance the budget in three years. We know we're already \$611 million off just from the estimates in this one ministry. We find out that they wouldn't have made those savings and delivered Ontario with a balanced budget in three years.

What we on this side of the House said is that waiting an extra year, balancing the budget in five years, was worth the issue of addressing job creation and the urgent need for employment in this province. When I went door to door, and I know my colleagues from all sides of the

House would have got this, the number one issue of the people of Ontario was job creation, spurring economic growth, and we put forward a concrete plan to deal with that.

Having said that, it meant we would have to balance the budget one year later, but we simply couldn't look at the people of Ontario and say to the unemployed, to those working families struggling to bring up a family in a high-tax environment, "No, you'll have to wait for five years; you'll have to wait until the fifth year before we address the problem of unemployment and job creation."

The people of Ontario told us that job creation, economic growth, creating an Ontario that encourages investment and job creation is key, that it should be the top priority of the provincial government. We have taken some actions to get government spending under control and when we do that and bring in lower deficits and eventually, in five years, a balanced budget—that's already had a tremendous effect. We learned from my colleague the minister of industry and trade today that there were 33,000 jobs created in February, the highest job creation for any February since 1981, that better economic times are already beginning to be fostered.

We also know from the statistics released by the federal government that 33,000 of the 44,000 jobs created in this country were created here in Ontario because of the climate that this government is setting, the climate that this government is encouraging for job creation, and I think that's good news for the people of Ontario. For my colleagues opposite who say to tell the unemployed to wait, that they should wait for an extra year, they should wait until year five of this government's mandate for job creation and major government initiatives to deal with job creation, it is simply too much.

We learned from the experience in other jurisdictions; we learned from the federal experience, the federal Liberals. We learned they would borrow \$6 billion and spend it on infrastructure. What did infrastructure mean? We found out what infrastructure meant after the election.

Mr Chiarelli: Highway 416.

Mr Baird: My friend the member for Ottawa West talks about infrastructure and Highway 416. The money that the federal Liberals put up for Highway 416 did not come from the infrastructure program. They had to find the money elsewhere because they had—

Mr Chiarelli: What did they spend in Nepean?

Mr Baird: Do you know what they had spent it on?

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): The member for Ottawa West.

Mr Baird: The federal Liberals had spent the \$6 billion infrastructure program on a golf course in one constituency. They had spent it on a museum celebrating the industrial heritage of Shawinigan. I wondered, where was Shawinigan? It's in the constituency of the Prime Minister. They're building a museum to celebrate the industrial history of Shawinigan when, regrettably, there's no job creation program to give it industry today. That's just simply outrageous.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): Is that like the millions of dollars spent on Mulroney's old riding?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): So's Mulroney.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please, the member for Kingston and The Islands.

Mr Baird: My colleague the member for Essex South is comparing the actions taken by Mr Chrétien to the previous Prime Minister, Brian Mulroney. I'm sure his colleagues in Ottawa would be abhorred to learn that members of the Liberal caucus are comparing Mr Chrétien's actions to Brian Mulroney's.

I go on to point to examples where the federal Liberals' job creation strategy included bringing cable television into a rural community. I don't think when the people of Canada voted for a federal Liberal government, their idea of job creation was to say, "Listen, you're going to have work harder and longer, and we'll take tax dollars"—and the federal Liberals have of course increased tax rates in this country. They increased taxes, and they take that money and they spend it on cable television for some communities. They spent it on a canoe museum in one constituency. That was a good one. They spent it on I think a curling rink in the north end of Toronto, or some sort of recreational sports facility—

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): Bocce ball.

Mr Baird: My colleague from Northumberland says it's bocce ball.

I don't think the job creation programs announced by the federal Liberals are what worked. Clearly, we've had them in power for some two or three years, and the job creation numbers that they promised just simply haven't arisen.

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What we say is cut taxes to create jobs; cut regulation to create jobs; spend appropriately, which deals directly with this estimates process, to create jobs. When we cut government spending, interest rates have already fallen some 2%, and that makes mortgages, consumer loans and car loans, loans for small business to start up and create jobs, more affordable for the people of Ontario. That's what the people of Ontario elected a government for: to take real action to create jobs and an environment that will encourage job creation.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I'm pleased to join the debate on the estimates. I'll start off commenting on the accountability that the member mentioned. The public may not be aware, but for the first time in the history of the province, the first time ever, we have a government that has not presented a budget. We will have gone a full year with no budget. The government, for the first time in history, refused to present a budget. The members may say, "Well, we just got elected in June." There have been lots of governments elected in June who then moved to present a budget.

Mr Bradley: Why wouldn't they present one?

Mr Phillips: My colleague says, "Why wouldn't they present it?" In my opinion, because you did not want to reveal to the people of Ontario your fiscal plan.

I comment on this because the member just talked about accountability. Frankly, if I were in the back bench of the Conservative Party, I would not have let them get away with it. They may have said: "Well, we just want to do this because we're a little bit disorganized right now. We don't have time to prepare a budget." But I find it objectionable, really objectionable, that for the first

time in the history of this province of Ontario since Confederation, we did not have a budget. We did not have an opportunity for this Legislature to debate the budget. The government wasn't required to lay out for the people of Ontario their fiscal plan. So what we've dealt with is what's called warrants, where the government has gone to the Lieutenant Governor and said, "Please give us the money to operate," and we're dealing now with estimates, but no budget. I simply find that unacceptable.

But I wanted to touch a little bit on some of the issues that have been raised around the impact on jobs. I think the first thing that the people of Ontario should recognize is that—this is the government's document. They prepared a fiscal statement: instead of a budget, a fiscal statement. No opportunity for debate on a budget but simply a fiscal statement.

But one of the very interesting pages in here, Madam Speaker, outlines the job situation for the province of Ontario. Would you think, would anybody believe, that a government that says it has a program for seeing job creation, that "We have an idea of how we're going to see jobs created in the province of Ontario," the government itself predicts that there will be more people out of work in Ontario in 1996 than there were in 1995. And then the government predicts that in 1997 the number of people out of work will be higher than it is in 1996. So two and a half years—1997 is two and a half years into this government's mandate—we find by their own admission that there are more people out of work in 1997 than there were in 1995.

I find that frankly a disgrace, that the government is accepting, planning, that there will be more people out of work in 1997 in the province of Ontario than there were in 1995. I don't know whether you find that acceptable—

Mr Baird: Thirty-three thousand jobs. Come on.

Mr Phillips: The member is saying 33,000 jobs. The Premier today acknowledged that you will not see jobs created in Ontario fast enough to absorb the people entering the job market. There are going to be more people out of work in 1996 than there were in 1995. That's not me and the opposition speaking. Get this document, which you all have, and look at it.

I would also say that there is a provincial disgrace around youth unemployment. Frankly, I don't pretend to blame the Conservatives for this. Frankly, I find it unusual you are taking credit right now because if I were you, I would say, "We're just beginning to implement our plan," but you're trying to take credit for the job creation that might have occurred in February. The youth unemployment in the province of Ontario is between 25% and 30%. That is a disgrace that none of us should live with, when our young people between the ages of 15 and 24 have unemployment rates I think very close to 30%. The reported rate is lower than that because a huge number of them have simply dropped out. I truly don't blame the Conservatives at this stage for it, but it is a problem that all of us are going to have to tackle, and tackle with vigour.

Frankly, I believe you are a government that is fixated on cutting expenditures. This is your mission right now: cut expenditures. Your second mission is to cut taxes. I

will just say to you that in my opinion neither of those things are going to begin to tackle the provincial disgrace of youth unemployment. I raise all of this because we are facing it right now. Summer's coming up and our young people are going to be even more frustrated.

Your program calls now for tuition increases, as you know, a 15% tuition increase for colleges, 20% for universities, and we're now finding in certain programs—dentistry and I gather medicine—huge increases. I might say personally I worry about that. If your access to a profession like medicine, or dentistry, or pharmacy is going to depend on the size of your wallet, we have a problem in this province. I'm just saying that I guarantee you that this is a major problem that none of the estimates we're dealing with begins to address. I've heard virtually no talk from the government about it. The talk is all around cut, cut, cut. We are sowing the seeds, in my opinion, of a very significant problem if we don't begin to deal with and understand the size of the problem with our young people.

I wanted to touch a little bit on the job area around the OPSEU strike, because it is impacting on this year's fiscal statement. I think it's undeniable—when you ran you did say, "We are going to cut the level of the public service back to 1985 levels." I can remember the language was "the bloated bureaucracy back to the 1985 levels." I think even in the document—yes, "The provincial bureaucracy has grown by leaps and bounds over the past 10 years."

We heard today that it hasn't grown by leaps and bounds over the past 10 years. In fact, the government acknowledged that the size of the public service right now is exactly what it was in 1985. So when you ran—I know you ran on this, "We are going to trim the bloated bureaucracy"—you either didn't know the numbers when you made the commitment that you're going to reduce it to the 1985 levels, or you misled the public. Frankly, I have a document that was given to your government—it will take me a moment to find it here, but it was given to your government in February 1994. This is it here, sent to Mr Johnson. Actually, February 6, 1995, I'm sorry, after you published the Common Sense Revolution. It shows that the public sector in 1985 is the same as it is in 1995.

The reason I raise this is because OPSEU right now is at the table attempting to reach an agreement with the government. I realize the public is divided on the issue, they don't know which side to support, but it is absolutely clear that the government not only plans to get back to the 1985 levels, but it has told us and told the public you are going to cut the payroll of the government by one third. We had a little debate in the Legislature earlier today, but it is absolutely clear that it is the government's intention to reduce the size of the payroll by one third. It was presented in this document here, you're going to cut one third of the payroll, and in this document you say you're going to cut one third of the payroll.

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The reason I raise this is that you can imagine, if you're OPSEU—firstly, here's the situation they face: a five-year agreement, I gather, with no increase in remuneration for the individuals in it for five years. You have,

in my opinion, stolen \$300 million from their pension. The only way you could do that was through Bill 26, the omnibus bill, where you took \$300 million of entitlements out of their pension.

You have said you're going to return to the 1985 levels of staffing when you're already at 1985 levels. Then in my opinion you have said publicly you are going to cut one third of the payroll. So you can imagine the fear that OPSEU and its negotiators are faced with. Here they are facing a government that is determined for a drastic cutback in the number of positions, far beyond what you ever said in the campaign. In the campaign you said you were going back to 1985 levels. It now is clear you are going probably a third below the 1985 levels.

The members here may wonder, why has it been so difficult for us to reach an agreement with OPSEU? Why aren't they reasonable? Well, the fact of the matter is, OPSEU is faced with an enormously difficult position. The government's fiscal plan and financial plan are going to be exceedingly disruptive to OPSEU.

I frankly don't think the government's been forthcoming. Today we asked in the Legislature, what are your plans for staffing? What does it mean when you say you're going to cut a third of the payroll? Surely it means that you're going to cut a third of the positions.

We heard earlier today in the Legislature the government saying, "The opposition is scaremongering about cutbacks and things like that." We're not scaremongering. We are using your own statistics. We are using the numbers that you published. In my opinion, you have said you are going to cut the civil service by a third. If that's wrong, if for some reason or other the numbers you have given us are incorrect or we are misinterpreting them in some way, I think you owe it to the public to lay that out.

The next thing I'd like to talk a little bit about is the commitments you made in the campaign. I think you got an awful lot of support because you made three promises around programs. Certainly in my constituency you got a lot of support because you made these three promises, and you may remember them. It was around the whole issue of health care, classroom education and law enforcement. It was very comforting to people when you said, and here are the words you used, "The plan guarantees full funding for health care, law enforcement and education spending in the classroom." You go on in another place: "Total spending will be reduced by 20% in three years without touching a penny of health care funding. Other priorities of law enforcement and classroom funding for education will also be exempt."

That, certainly in my constituency, was something that got you a lot of support. They said, "Well, this is great. They're not going to touch health care, they're not going to touch the classroom and they're not going to touch law enforcement." Well, already this year and certainly in a very major way next year, you are touching it. You are cutting right into the health budget in a very major way. It's going to present some significant problems for you, because it was 100% clear that you were going to freeze the health care budget at the level of when the campaign started and hold that level.

I know the cabinet's trying to persuade the caucus to buy the idea, "Well, we are going to cut for about four years and we'll restore it at the end." But here's the problem: You are cutting hospital funding by 18%. I think many of us have probably at one time or another been on hospital boards in our communities. As the minister knows, I've been chairman of a hospital in my community and I know how difficult it is to manage change in the health care sector. But you have said to the hospitals, "Not only must you restructure, but at the same time as you are restructuring, we're going to cut 18% of your funding." In my opinion, that is going to cause chaos in the health care sector as they try and manage to restructure.

Believe me, hospitals are trying to work together. In my community of Scarborough, the three acute care hospitals are working very cooperatively together. But as they find incredible cuts to their budgets, they find it extremely difficult to work their way through the problems. So I will assure you that people will not allow you to wiggle off the commitment you made that you would not touch health care.

I would also say that for a lot of people in my community, when you said you would not put user fees on drugs, they believed you. If you read your promise carefully, which I hope all of you now have read, it was very explicit and it talked in detail about user fees and copayments. You said very clearly to people, "We are not going to put new user fees or new copayments on." Here are the words from your Common Sense Revolution:

"For some time now, there has been growing debate over the most effective way to ensure more responsible use of our universal health care system. In the last decade, user fees and copayments have kept rising and many health care services have been 'delisted' and are no longer covered by OHIP."

You went on to say: "We looked at those kinds of options, but decided the most effective and fair method was to give the public and health professionals alike a true and full accounting of the costs of health care, and ask individuals to pay a fair share of these costs, based on income. We believe the new fair share health care levy, based on the ability to pay, meets the test of fairness and the requirements of the Canada Health Act while protecting the fundamental integrity of our health care system."

"Under this plan, there will be no new user fees."

Now you've changed your mind. You've said, "Well, every other province has user fees and so we're going to put them in, so there it is." But the public are astute and understanding, and they realize that you made this very specific promise—it certainly was very effective in my community—and now you've broken that. One of the things that you say you're going to do is to keep your promises. You've broken your health care promise.

The second one is classroom spending. There is no doubt that the promise on protection of classroom funding has been broken, and you've only just begun. Just so we all know the numbers, the figures, you have said you're going to cut roughly 25% of provincial funding for elementary and secondary schools. You have cut, you've said, \$400 million, \$233 million of it in operating, and

you're going to cut a total of \$1 billion from the operating budget. But even as you've just begun, the cuts are already taking place in the classroom. Junior kindergarten in many communities is a thing of the past. Programs for adults—all of us, I think, believe in lifelong learning, and that has been cut. And we've only just begun.

The third area promised was that you would not touch law enforcement. I don't think there's a community in Ontario that has not found that their police organization budgets have been cut and they are making do with fewer and fewer officers. I don't think there's a single community in the province. I would just add to that that one thing I think particularly the back bench is going to want to watch is, we talked about the change in the public service over a 10-year period. Where in 1985 there were 81,000 public servants, today there are 81,000 public servants. So we are back to the 1985 level.

But within that, it's interesting to note that there has been significant growth in one part of the provincial public service, and that is law enforcement, the area that the Conservative Party promised to protect. The law enforcement component over that 10-year period has increased by 5,000—staffing has gone up by 5,000. This is our jails, our policing, and our courts. The rest of the civil service has gone down by 5,000—Health, Education, Comsoc, and all others. So as you and the government and your cabinet are at the negotiating table and planning a cutback to a level at least 13,000 lower than 1985, and probably more like 27,000 more, you are going to want to be able to answer the question: "How much have we cut back law enforcement? Because we said we'd never touch that. We said we would guarantee it."

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Mr Crozier: A solemn commitment.

Mr Phillips: "A solemn commitment," my colleague says.

So we find, as we're now I guess eight months into the revolution, the dreaded revolution, that some things are beginning to unravel. The revolution is beginning to bog down. Firstly, on the job front, I find it incredible that the government itself is planning more people out of work in 1997, two and a half years into the revolution, than when you came into office. Why is that? Why in the world could that be happening? Because that's what you're planning on. So on your job commitment—and believe me, we in our caucus will hold you accountable for this 725,000—you are not anywhere near on track to hitting those numbers.

On your big promise on the program area, the three things I think you gave a solemn promise on—"We will not touch health care, we will not touch classroom spending and we will not touch law enforcement"—you already have broken those promises and you are breaking them in an increasingly significant way.

Why is all of this happening? It's happening to fund the tax cut and I would just say that we've heard many different estimates on the cost of the tax cut. You yourself, when you ran, were very clear on what the tax cut would cost. You said that the tax cut—these are your numbers—in the first year, the one that starts in just a few weeks, April 1, would cost \$2.2 billion, then \$3.4 billion, \$4.7 billion, \$4.8 billion, going up to \$5 billion

a year. Now, you may be interested—and I would hope all of the members of the Legislature get this document—this was tabled today in the Legislature. It's called an 18-K. It is a document that the government files in the US. It had a couple of interesting things in it that were never divulged here but were divulged in the 18-K.

Mr Crozier: To your US friends.

Mr Phillips: "To your US friends," as my colleague says. One is very significant—well, they're both very significant, but the one highlights that you are planning a very significant severance payment in the fiscal year 1995-96. On all of the documents here in Ontario you never mention that. You never mention in the fiscal statements that you are planning significant severance costs, but in this document, which is filed in the US, it mentions the severance costs and you say that once these charges are taken into account they will be added to the deficit, the \$9.3-billion deficit. It is absolutely clear from this document—you never mentioned anywhere publicly in Ontario that you're planning significant severance costs, but in a document filed in the US you do acknowledge, as I say, significant severance costs.

The other thing you do acknowledge is the cost of the tax break. Some of the public may be aware that we attempted to get from the government the cost of the tax break. We had the Minister of Finance to a finance committee and we said: "What is this tax cut going to cost? What did your officials say it would cost?" The minister said, "I never asked my officials to prepare an estimate." It was the most incredible statement I've heard, because this is the big financial decision the government's going to make.

I would have thought that five minutes after being appointed Minister of Finance, the minister would have said to the officials: "Listen, we've made this promise we're going to reduce taxes by 20 points. What's the cost?" But he said in committee, as you all know, "I've never asked them for an estimate of the cost of it." He didn't know. Is that really any way to run this operation? Do any of you think that's a way to run the operation, where you haven't even asked, after eight months, the financial officials to give you an estimate of your key campaign commitment?

It is obvious they could have done it, because in this document the government says that a single percentage increase in Ontario's tax rate is estimated to yield approximately \$272 million. What that says is that if you proceed with your tax cut, the reduction of 20 percentage points, from 58% of the federal to 38%, the cost is \$5.4 billion. It's very clear.

By the way, the minister I think at the same meeting said: "Well, our tax commitment wasn't all that clear. It was around 30%. We're not sure exactly what it will be." I would just say that will come as quite a surprise to a lot of people because many of them still carry around the Common Sense Revolution, as I do, and your promise was extremely explicit. You couldn't have been clearer. In fact, you got the tax cut down to the nearest dollar. If you're making \$75,000 a year, your annual saving is \$2,922—not \$2,921 or \$2,923, but \$2,922.

Mr Crozier: Including the fair tax levy.

Mr Phillips: Including the fair tax levy, my colleague mentions that.

First, why are we going through the depth of pain for the cuts? It is because you have had to find at least \$2 billion more money in cuts than you had planned. We are in this province going to cut expenditures by \$8 billion, and more than half of that—\$5.5 billion of that \$8-billion cut—goes right out in the form of a tax break.

My point is this. I realize many people out there are probably saying, "I can hardly wait for my tax cut," and I understand that. That's who you're counting on, people to cheer you on in it. But if this deficit is such a huge problem, if all of us in this Legislature believe we have the fight of our lives, to fight the deficit—and it is a significant problem—how can it be that we can afford a \$5.5-billion tax cut, that more than half of all of those expenditure cuts go right back out the door in a tax break? You can imagine how many people out there who are being faced with significant cutbacks and living with them are asking the question, "Wait a minute, if this thing is such a huge problem, how can we possibly afford this tax break?"

I will add another thing. Every penny of this tax break is borrowed money. It isn't as if we're running a surplus in this province. The province over the next five years will provide a total of \$20 billion in a tax break, and every penny of that is borrowed money.

Mr Crozier: How much will that cost?

Mr Phillips: The cumulative interest on that will be \$5 billion. So I say to many of my friends in the business community, I know that you and many of your friends might very well—we all would love a tax break, but does it make fiscal sense that we are able to give a \$5.5-billion tax break—all of that money has to be borrowed—when we have such an incredible problem in dealing with our deficit?

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): Yes, but you had an opportunity 10 years ago, Gerry. That's the problem.
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Mr Phillips: I'm going to be running out of time, but someone barked over there about if we'd dealt with it. Let me just say, do yourselves a favour. I know you think—I was going to say Mike—Mr Harris and the gang ran things well: 1969 was the last year a Conservative government balanced the budget. Get out the 1984 budget and you will see deficits, huge deficits, consistent deficits, running \$2.5 billion your last five years. The last five years of Conservative government, you ran deficits of \$2.7 billion a year.

My point is this: Don't assume that the Premier and his colleague there know how to run the finances. The last time they had their hand on the till, the deficit was \$2.7 billion. The unemployment rate was well over 9%, and the last time a Conservative—this was Mr MacNaughton, 1969. You people will have gone, the Conservatives will have gone 20 years without ever having balanced the budget. So I'm just saying to you, don't assume that they know what they're doing, the cabinet. Don't assume that.

Mr Crozier: When was the last balanced budget?

Mr Phillips: My colleague says, "When was the last balanced budget?" The Provincial Auditor checked it all out and he said there's been only one balanced budget in

25 years in the province of Ontario, the year 1989-90. Your own fiscal document, by the way, confirms that.

The Acting Speaker: The member's time is up. Thank you very much for your speech. Further comments?

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I also appreciate the opportunity to rise today and speak on this concurrence motion re the tabling of the report from the standing committee on estimates. I spent the last month and a half to two months around this place sitting and listening and participating in the discussion that ensues from the tabling of those documents and the questions raised and the concerns raised, and I have to tell you that it was, for me, quite a learning experience.

The most obvious feeling coming out of that experience was that in fact this government doesn't really have a plan, or if it does, it's not being shared readily with the people of this province, because it doesn't fit those things that are needed that would be in the best interest of the people who live and work in communities like Sault Ste Marie, Thunder Bay, Kingston, Windsor.

I think it's important, before I speak directly about some of what became obvious as we went through those hearings, the context, or some of the context, within which we discussed estimates this year the month of February and some of March in this province. The premise of all of the plans of the government that we have in front of us in Ontario today is that somehow the economy is in crisis and that we need to be doing some things to correct that, to, as they say, bring back a sense of economic health to the business sector in Ontario.

That, from all the reports that we're hearing, is just not the truth. This province was actually in fact on good footing when our government went to the polls in June 1995 and has taken a considerable downturn since then because of some of the things that this government is both doing and saying it's going to do, which is having a very negative impact, or, as they say, a negative drag, on the economy of communities out there, particularly where it concerns the smaller business sector.

But for somebody to for a second purport that the economy of Ontario was not doing well or that we were not attracting investment to this province in the years 1993, 1994 and 1995 is just not supported by the reports and the facts as they come at us. As a matter of fact, in 1994 we saw in this province record investment, historically record high investment, and we were creating jobs.

Any of you who spent any time in your community, particularly after the Christmas of 1994, which is traditionally the busiest time for the retail sector, which oftentimes indicates to us in communities just how the economy is doing—if you were walking around the malls and the streets of your community after the Christmas of 1994, you had to have felt, as I did, the buoyancy that was out there, the sense of good feeling that was in people, the willingness to spend, the reports that the small business sector was making re the kind of spending that went on during that Christmas period and the plans it was making for expansion and the hiring of new employees, and the comfortableness that working people in Ontario were feeling at that particular point in time.

I have to tell you, as I walk around my community now, the mood is completely different. There isn't that

confidence any more that consumers need re the long-term prospects re their jobs and the economic stability of the family unit to which they belong. So where we were experiencing a growth and things were going well and corporations—particularly the smaller business sector—were beginning to experience some positive results, we are now finding that this has in fact turned around and what we have are large corporations, because of the downsizing that they're doing and the restructuring that they're doing, declaring record profits while at the same time the small business sector is struggling to keep its head above water.

So where it used to be we had business making profit and doing well at some periods in our history and the workers being targeted for lower wages or losing their jobs, we now begin to see that the small business sector is being lumped in with the workers and where corporations such as Barrick Gold, which in 1995 dug up a 10th straight year of record profits, and GM in 1995 declaring a record profit of \$1.39 billion and Scotiabank making \$876 million and defending its record earnings while most of these organizations are cutting staff and employees. We move over to a company like Brascan that has a lot of interest in our province. There are a couple of them in my own community; Great Lakes Power is owned by Brascan. In 1995, they made a record profit of \$312 million, the best in their 96-year history.

To suggest for a minute that there's something wrong with the economy re big business interest in Ontario and its willingness to invest and to generate wealth in just their jurisdiction is wrong. I don't want people to get me wrong. I don't have any difficulty with profit and people making profit and the generation of wealth. I think it plays a very important part in the health of a community and certainly it's something that we in Ontario hope that we're able to continue. It's the question of how that wealth gets distributed that concerns me. It's the question of how we as a government participate in the discussion around how that wealth gets distributed that concerns me. It became obvious as we went through the exercise of looking at the estimates of the government and questioning the ministers who sat before us during those very valuable days of question and answer and back and forth.

I had the privilege of sitting and having some discussion with at least four of the ministers of this government, four ministers who carry some very important portfolios where it concerns the health and social well-being of the people of Ontario. The first minister was the Minister of Education and Training. Then we had before us the Minister of Community and Social Services, followed by the Minister of Housing and then the Minister of Health.

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I guess if there was a common thread that went through the discussion that we had with all four of those folks as they came before us, it was that where it concerned their ministries there seemed to be no plan. It was government by the seat of your pants. It was a commitment to cutting and slashing and reducing and getting government out of the life of people in the province at any cost. It was a "take no prisoners" approach where it concerned the livelihood or the wellbeing or the health of

those who are most vulnerable in our communities—the handicapped, women and children.

Whenever we asked a question that was specific or focused or pointed, I felt we always got back—as we heard today in question period here in the House—a very haughty, arrogant set of clichés, pious platitudes and a mantra that became increasingly grating on the ears. In fact, it was interesting, when we first started off, that whenever a minister was asked a specifically difficult question where it reflected on a particular organization in a community being able to continue to provide the very valuable services that it did, we got into the mantra and the clichés and the platitudes. Initially the ministers were reading those out to us; eventually they learned them by rote and were able to repeat them without having to look at the paper.

I think that's what you'll find with this government, particularly probably in the first two or three years anyway, that as it goes through this very harmful exercise of cutting and slashing, we will in fact begin to learn those platitudes and mantras and clichés by rote as well and will be able to give them back to you before you give them to us.

That's really unfortunate because this province was, as I stated before, on good footing going into the middle of 1995. The large corporations were making profits. We had record investment in the province. People were working and were feeling confident that the work that they had would continue for some time, and so they were spending and consumer confidence was up. That all lends itself to a sense of stability and health in the economy, which then flows over into a sense of stability and confidence that the programs that we all need from time to time as we experience difficulty or bad health or whatever will be there and will be able to provide us with the wherewithal to keep ourselves, to keep body and soul together, to put food on the table for our children, and to be able to contribute in the economy in the way that we all want to contribute.

We as a government in the early 1990s struggled with the recession that came at us. That was very, very difficult and very deep, and we did some things in order to adjust to the reality that we faced. We made a decision that it was important, on one hand, to be investing in programs and infrastructure and education systems and health care, which was a long-term view of what we as a government needed to do to make sure that we were going to be in good shape as we moved into the next century and as we developed a province that would be supportive of a future for our children. On the other hand, we were very concerned about our operating. We wanted to make sure that from one year to the next we had enough money in the kitty to make sure that we were able to pay for those very direct services that people needed to have when they needed to have them.

So we divvied up in two the way that we looked at the finances in the province. We had investment, long-term investment, that we felt that we could go to the bank for. We actually created some new institutions, three corporations that were given the facility to act in partnership with the private sector out there. There was the clean water agency that we established, there was the realty

corporation that was established and there was also a transportation corporation that we put in place to help us with the very important infrastructure that represents for this province.

That was beginning to unfold in a very positive and constructive light. Things were happening. People were working. We were building highways. We were building subways. In northern Ontario, even though always dissatisfied that we were not doing enough in the area of repairing and improving the highways and building new highways and four-laning some of the highways, we were making some significant progress, particularly where it concerned, for example, Highway 69.

Anybody from northern Ontario will tell you that Highway 69 is an important piece of infrastructure, it's an important avenue for us as we come from the north, whether it's with our goods for market or whether we come to spend money down here or to participate in the economy of southern Ontario. Whether we come down here for health reasons or social reasons, a lot of us get funnelled through Highway 69.

Slowly but surely, governments, up until this year, were continuing to improve that highway and move the four-laning of it up. I drive that highway quite a bit and I know myself, and in talking to other people, that as we get closer and closer to Parry Sound, we begin to think about the fact that soon we'll be on the four lanes. That was always something to look forward to.

This government, in its wisdom, as part of its new approach to stimulating the economy of this province, has decided to put a stop to any further development of the four-laning of Highway 69 and so has effectively cut off any further progress re our ability to get our goods to market, to southern Ontario, and our ability actually to feel safe as we travel back and forth between the area of Metro Toronto and the communities that we all live and work in in northern Ontario.

That highway is very, very dangerous and we lose a lot of lives on it every year. Certainly in that area that has been improved by way of four lanes, the number of accidents and the number of people we lose are minimized. We were all looking forward to that, but that now is gone, because the new approach this government is taking and that we talked about in the estimates exercise we went through is to cut and to not worry about the impact that has on everything else that is so intimately interconnected as we look at the way this province does its business, carries out its work, provides health care and social services to people and tries to provide for a decent standard of living for all of us who have chosen one way or another to come, to live, to work and to participate in the everyday life of the communities we live in in the province of Ontario.

Where we had a plan that was reflected in the estimates that were tabled—because those estimates were after all estimates based on the work we were doing as government—that plan is now out the window. We don't know what the plan is any more. We hear little tidbits from time to time. There was a report tabled in the States where we're told that, for example, in the Common Sense Revolution, we were going to balance the budget in two years. Then in the initial statement out from the govern-

ment, we were going to do it in four years. Now we find we're not going to do it until the next century, and it's questionable whether that in fact is going to happen because the figures that are starting to come out that were actually presented by Mr Phillips, the speaker before me, are indicating that we're expecting the deficit for this year will be higher than what was projected in the statement of November 1995. With that in mind, as these numbers change from one month to the next, as this government comes to terms with the fact that its figures were wrong, that we were right during the election that the numbers didn't add up, we don't know where they're going to wind up or what condition this province is going to end up in.

I have to tell you frankly that it worries me, because I'm concerned about the people I represent. I'm concerned about their ability to make a living and I'm concerned about the services they need as they go through this transition period, as they deal with the direct effects of this cost-cutting and downsizing that's going on, and try, as I've said before, to keep body and soul together and put food on the table for their children and keep a roof over their head.

As a member of the estimates committee, I sat through most of the presentations that were made by the ministers, and I have to say I was getting a double message there. There were some ministers who I felt had some very sincere concern for the area they had responsibility over, but they seemed to be hamstrung. They seemed to have their hands tied. They at times certainly lent some sympathy to some of the scenarios that we painted and the concerns that we raised, but in the end would not act as an advocate on behalf of those who so much depend on them—the poor of the province, the women of the province, the disabled of the province—as the cutbacks they preside over begin to take effect and really hurt them.

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This government, when they talk about restructuring services, are actually talking about all the promises they made in their Common Sense Revolution that we find they now are beginning to break in ever-increasing numbers.

They've broken their promise to protect health care funding. They have broken their promise to protect funding to the classrooms of the schools of the province, and without any study or impact analysis have decided to do things that will see, for example, junior kindergarten disappear across this province. They have broken their promise to the disabled and the elderly. They have introduced new user fees for health care. They have broken their promise to children and the most vulnerable citizens of this province. Their spending decisions will result in higher property taxes and new user fees for municipal services. They've broken their promises to the taxpayers of the province.

They have broken these promises in order to pay for the irresponsible tax cut that Mr Harris keeps recommitting his government to implementing with every day that goes by.

Therefore, his ministers, as I've said, have come to this exercise of looking at the estimates of the government

with nothing to offer but a whole lot of rhetoric. That's unfortunate, because I'm sure some of them are very intelligent and very committed to the area they've been given responsibility for, but they can't do anything. While the tax cut will benefit the most wealthy, the spending cuts have the biggest impact on women, children, the poor, the disabled, the elderly and the sick. None of these cuts are about balancing the budget; they are about Mike Harris's personal commitment to introduce a 30% tax cut. That's what it's about.

What will this tax cut do? We're told that the tax cut will reinvigorate the economy, that this tax cut will help this government live up to its promise of 725,000 new jobs.

I have to tell you, there was one day when I sat in front of the Minister of Education and Training and I had two students with me from Humber College. They were partway through their second-year social work at that college. Looking at the cuts that are happening to government services these days and projected as life unfolds, they're not sure whether there's going to be a job for them when they finish their program in a year and a half. What they were wanting me to ask the minister was where these 725,000 new jobs that were promised during the election in the Common Sense Revolution would be, so that if they needed to make a decision about changing track or taking further courses regarding their future, they could do it now as opposed to later, when maybe it would be too late.

The minister had no answer. As a matter of fact, he got quite indignant with me and told me that he was personally offended by anybody who would mortgage our present on the backs of the children of the future, not recognizing that what he was doing in trying to give a 30% tax break to his wealthy friends and benefactors was taking away any future that the young people of today might have, because they won't be able to afford the education they need any more and there won't be any jobs out there. There just will not be any jobs out there.

I found it interesting that Mr Phillips again raised by way of reports that he keeps reading and that we keep hearing about that in fact there will be fewer jobs in 1997 than there are in 1995: fewer jobs. That means that they're protecting themselves, that their program will in fact not work. So if there are going to be fewer jobs in 1997 than in 1995 and we're already losing jobs in 1995, I guess the question that needs to be asked is, just where are the 725,000 jobs going to come from and what is this tax break going to do for the people of this province?

It will definitely help people who don't need it, because the people who will get the break are those who already have jobs and are already making money. Whether they'll reinvest it or not in Ontario is questionable as well.

More than half of the tax cut will go to families whose incomes are over \$90,000. The median income in Ontario is between \$20,000 and \$30,000 per year. It is the majority of the people of this province who depend for their daily lives on the services whom this government is destroying.

The Common Sense Revolution makes a commitment to protect health care, classroom education and law

enforcement while eliminating the deficit and cutting taxes. However, Mike Harris has broken these promises, and he's hurting thousands of people because his fiscal plan requires even deeper cuts than he was willing to talk about in the election campaign.

While the government refuses to listen, we have heard from many people representing the vulnerable, representing the people who are affected by this government's decision. As is consistently pointed out by these people, the cuts are resulting in increasing numbers of people losing their homes. Increasing numbers of families are in shelters and increasing numbers are going to food banks for help.

As a matter of fact, I don't think that any of us here could have missed the phenomenon this winter of driving up University Avenue and seeing more and more people sleeping on the sidewalks and park benches and grates of this, one of the wealthiest cities in the world. Not only was it individuals this year, it was whole families of people lying on the streets at night and sleeping out in the cold. We were told a week or two ago that we may be on the verge of a TB epidemic in the city as well. If that doesn't concern the government of the day, I really don't know what will. If that doesn't tell them that something is wrong, that their plan, if they have a plan, is not working, then I don't know what will.

All of this has a further negative effect on the economy of lost productivity and increasing dependence on government programs, but as the Tories spout their rhetoric, they refuse to talk about the loss in human capital. They refuse to talk about the real impact of their decisions.

I know the difference between what Mike Harris's minister said at committee and what is really happening because I'm out there listening and talking to the people in my community. As a matter of fact, a study has been done, in September 1995, in the community of the very Premier of the province today which paints a pretty bleak picture about just exactly what the impact of the policies and programs of this government is going to have on that community and on its economy.

It says here in the executive summary, just to encapsulate:

"Governments across this country are basing their economic policies and programs on the assumption that government is too large, and on the additional premise that the path to economic prosperity lies in making deep cuts to government expenditures. This study shows that this strategy may be counterproductive. In fact, it could make things a lot worse than they already are.

"The main reason is that when people are employed, they have money to spend on goods and services. When they do this, they help make the grocery stores, restaurants, car dealers, home builders and other business establishments they patronize successful. Those businesses then have more money to hire employees, pay suppliers and so on. Those employees and suppliers also spend money on goods and services. This puts even more money into the economy, helps create even more jobs and results in economic growth.

"All this, of course, works in reverse when people lose their jobs. The Harris government in Ontario has

announced that it is considering substantial reductions in public sector jobs. Using a study by Mr McCracken that was done in 1994, based on the assumption of a potential 5% job cut across the public service and a potential 5% reduction in remaining workers' wages, our analysis has shown the following:

"In total in North Bay, a small community in northern Ontario that's very much self-contained, over 1,000 public and private sector jobs will be lost because of the agenda of this government. Governments would lose \$19.2 million in revenues, \$10.4 million at the federal level, \$7.1 million at the provincial level, and \$1.7 million at the municipal level. As a result, municipal programs and services could be at risk."

Therefore, North Bay, its public sector institutions and its citizens already have to cope with the effects of existing government cutbacks and perhaps even future cutbacks even without the cuts postulated for purposes of the study that's here. So communities like North Bay, Sudbury, Sault Ste Marie, Timmins and Thunder Bay are going to be fundamentally changed, are going to be impacted negatively in a way that may cause us who have responsibility for leadership in those communities to ask whether in fact we will be able to survive in the way that we have.

In wrapping up, what I heard during the time that I sat on the estimates committee is that the program of this government, the track that this government is on is actually destroying the province, and I want to say to the members across the way that I feel personally we shouldn't be cutting, that we should in fact rather be investing. There's nothing more important to people who want to invest in a jurisdiction than a well-educated workforce, a good social structure, social services and health care, and a good infrastructure program, and they are being destroyed in the province of Ontario today.

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Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): As a junior person on this estimates committee, I find it quite amusing here to think that we should be standing here debating the Common Sense Revolution. I thought we were on estimates. I thought the member from the Liberal Party talked about the Finance minister, and I never thought there was anything along that line, that the Finance minister ever appeared before the committee on estimates. I only missed one afternoon, so maybe he slipped in that afternoon that I wasn't there. I'm not sure.

In my recollection of what I've seen as a member here, during the Minister of Transportation's deliberation to that committee—we have some roads in this province that are not in the greatest of shape. I don't think they all got that way since the election on June 8. I think some of them were worn out a little bit before that.

I happen to live in the eastern part of Ontario and I know a little bit about 401 east of Shannonville river, where there was a major breakup all winter long. We have a little bit of a problem there, in that the wisdom of other governments have seen fit to put cement down. The cement was put on there some few years ago. I can't tell you exactly when 401 was built, but back in the relatively early 1960s, I believe. They covered that road with asphalt. The asphalt and the cement have started to separ-

ate. I'm not an engineer and I'm a long way from one of those kind of people, but I do know that they didn't adhere and it became a very, very dangerous situation. It's something that we as a government are going to have to spend a lot of money on, to put those road structures, the infrastructure, back into shape.

I think that as long as we're prepared to look at those kinds of things—and I know that the opposition over here says they left things in a great array of—everything was in fine order, everything was in excellent shape, but they forgot to tell us that they were just another \$10 billion in the hole for another year, that \$100 billion that we're paying interest on, that \$1 million an hour. I'm sure it would build a lot of roads and improve a lot of highways, whether it's in eastern Ontario or northern Ontario or any place else.

I was quite interested to know that the Minister of Transportation was quite encouraged by the people who are in the trucking business that they're going to try to encourage the builders of trucks to do away with those lift axles, because the lift axles are something that allows a lot of these trucks to be way overweight and when they're overweight they are the people who wear out our roads. I think this is one of the things that is going to be a plus for this government, to encourage the industry to do away with that kind of configuration of truck axles.

We also learned that the A trains that some of you people may be familiar with, where they put a couple of tractor-trailers together, this configuration is probably the easiest wear on our roads that we have. I think it's nice to know he has the feeling that those are the kinds of things that as Minister of Transportation he can encourage our people to spend the money wisely on and encourage the truck people to do that kind of development. We also are very interested in the safety of our trucks on the road. I think those are the kinds of dollars that also have to be spent, to make sure those trucks are kept and maintained and that type of thing.

I'm certainly not going to use up all my time talking about the Common Sense Revolution, but I'm going to touch on a couple of other—

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): Don't blame you for that.

Mr Rollins: It's out there and it's all ready to be put out, so it's not hard to figure, Floyd. We're going to do what we're going to do, and we're going to do what we said we'd do, and that's where it is. It's not a hard thing to follow, I'm sure of that.

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): Not one penny from health care.

Mr Rollins: "Not one penny from health care." I hear that across from the other side.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): A man has to do what a man has to do.

Mr Rollins: I'll tell you what we're going to do with health care. We're not going to deregulate a whole bunch more drugs. We're going to try to put a few more back on, so that's not the easiest way. I believe the last government deregulated a large number of drugs.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Laughren: Mr Speaker, he's on steroids.

Mr Rollins: No, I'm not on steroids, but you'll have a little few. Maybe you should use some. It'll help you out.

They talk about an 18% cut in the hospital tax. You, as a government over there, sit there and close down 6,700 beds. You did a nice job of that. But we didn't get rid of one administration. I think we've got to take a look at that as a government. Our Minister of Health told us that he would take a good look at that and try to reduce those administrations to save dollars from the health system so they can be reinvested. Yes, reinvested in dialysis machines, reinvested in heart operations, reinvested back in the people of Ontario. We just can't increase our health budget more and more and more, because unfortunately that \$9-billion interest tag keeps sticking its head up every day and we have to pay it. If we didn't have that \$9 billion, I think a good chunk of that would solve a lot of our problems.

Mr Chris Stockwell (Etobicoke West): Listen up for a change.

Mr Rollins: Take a little heed of this.

We also started out something with paying our doctors in the outlying areas so that they could stand-by emergencies. I think this is a real step in that direction so that the people of outlying Ontario, where there isn't a lot of coverage—so some of the doctors are a little more encouraged to go to work. A little place close to our community in Bancroft, we have five doctors back there and they are very happy with that. Some of the emergency rooms in some of our hospitals certainly need to be rebuilt, put back into place, and we cannot do that unless we take some of the dollars out of the health budget and reinvest them. Believe me, those dollars will go back into there to be reinvested to make a better place.

Mr Laughren: I got a policy I want to sell you.

Mr Rollins: I know your insurance policy, Floyd, is different than mine, but I think the thing is, we've got to have—

Mr Pouliot: So is the pension.

Mr Rollins: Yes, I know. His pension is fantastic, you know. It's not even a laughing matter. It's a serious problem, particularly for somebody like me who won't have a pension. It's a disaster. I'm not saying he doesn't deserve the pension. I'm not saying that in any one way, shape or form. Anyway, you should get it, Floyd, for sure.

Mr Stockwell: I think it should be based on height.

Mr Rollins: No, no, you can't do that, because it would be cut down too low. No, they might get on to him.

One of the other places that I want to touch on for a minute is education. I think under the education system we've had to reduce our administration. Now, I know that we, as a government, said that we would not reduce classroom dollars, but we've got to take a look at the dollars that we spend in the province of Ontario when we spend \$400 or \$500 per student higher than the other areas in this Canada of ours. I think we've got to make sure those dollars are spent more wisely.

We're going to remove grade 13 from the system. It's roughly 20%. It's five years; we're going back down to four years. Certainly there are going to be some teachers

cut back. There's certainly going to be some heavier loads put on our younger people to be able to learn in four years what the rest of the country has been able to do.

1650

Mr Pouliot: You and I won't miss it.

Mr Rollins: No, you've learned enough and probably I'll never learn enough, so there's the difference in that problem. There's no problem there, Gilles.

But I think the percentage of our cutdowns with the budgets that we've got to be prepared to spend, the dollars that we're going to have to spend in this government, have got to be looked at very, very closely. We have got to get to a balanced budget. Whether it's in health or wherever it is, we've got to get there, because we cannot continue to let our mortgage grow. Our mortgage has been growing, as well you know, at a pretty alarming rate, and we cannot continue the way we are. Somehow or another, we have got to start and balance the budget, and we've got to balance the budget radically. We don't want to balance it in three or four years like you people. It's nice to have people like Ralph Klein to show us the way to go, because if we'd kept on going the way we were, we'd have been a lot worse off.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Write it off the budget. Didn't you hear him last week?

Mr Rollins: I know, and it was a very nice thing just to hear on the radio or in the newspapers in the last two or three days that we created some 30,000 jobs in February. Holy jeepers, I don't think anybody thought of that before. My goodness, it was very good.

When you bury your head and you don't want to look any other way, it's terrible. I think the biggest thing that we've got to look at is to make darn sure that we balance the budget, do the things that the Mike Harris Common Sense Revolution said we'd do and make sure that in the year 2000 or 2001, that budget is balanced. The jobs will be there, the investments will be there, and I for one want to be part of that government when that happens.

Mrs Caplan: I rise to participate in the estimates debate. This is a particularly difficult time in the province of Ontario. I think what people are learning is that just because Premier Harris says something, that doesn't make it so, and just as my colleagues from the government caucus are standing to speak, their rhetoric will not and does not make it so. There are many in this province who are beginning to realize—

Mr Stockwell: That you're right—

Mrs Caplan: —that what the government is saying and what the government is doing are two entirely different things.

The member for Etobicoke, who interjects even though he's not in his seat, might be interested to know that my intention today is to put on the record words that are not mine, because I believe there are many who in fact diminish much of what is said in this House because they don't like politicians, they don't know who they can believe, and notwithstanding the fact that my constituents always say to me, "But you're different, Elinor," today during this debate what I'd like to do, Mr Speaker, is put on the record the words of others. I will quote them and

tell you who I am quoting, because I think that it is relevant at this particular time.

Particularly today at the Ontario Legislature we have nothing to smile about. Members of the government's own union, OPSEU, are striking. They have been on strike for some three weeks. We have seen unprecedented violence and anger and frustration on those picket lines, and I think most people in this province are unaware of why the strike is going on, what the issues are, and there has been anxiety that has been fuelled by the rhetoric and the actions of some of the members of the government caucus.

I would like to place on the record an article that was written March 11 on the op ed page of that good old Liberal newspaper, the *Globe and Mail*. The article is written by H.J. Glasbeek, who is professor emeritus, Osgoode Hall Law School, York University. I think that he fairly puts the issues that are before us in this strike. This is what Professor Glasbeek has to say. The article is entitled, "How the Harris Government Undermines OPSEU."

"The Conservative government of Mike Harris always meant to manoeuvre the Ontario Public Service Employees Union into a strike position. The best Ontarians can hope for is that the government's cruel cynicism will be matched by its ineptness and that working people can come out of the trap laid for them with their dignity and organizations intact.

"To understand how cynical the government has been, it is necessary to ask this question: How is it that OPSEU was in a legal position to strike at all? After all, Ontario's public servants had not had the right to strike until the previous New Democratic Party government gave it to them, as part of a package of labour law reforms that was vehemently denounced at the time by the Tories. The Tories, now in power, claim that even if their own policies are not always well received by the public, they should be given credit for living up to all their promises, in particular those on labour law reform. Despite vigorous opposition, they have already repealed the Employment Equity Act and have started to gut the Pay Equity Act. But—and in this context it is an extremely large 'but'—they have not done away with the NDP-granted right to strike for public sector workers.

"Are we to believe that the Conservatives overlooked this major NDP reform? Or did the Harris government see a political advantage in leaving the choice about whether to strike with the union and its members? The government had reason to feel confident that it would gain politically whether the members refused a strike recommendation by their leaders or whether they went on strike.

"With the NDP-instituted social contract coming to an end, Ontario had to reach a collective agreement with OPSEU. The government, all the time protesting that it believed in responsible trade unionism and good-faith bargaining, changed the playing field before bargaining was to begin. Before a single negotiating session took place, the government:

"(1) Announced that it was firm about dismissing 13,000 employees and allowed (caused?) rumours to swirl around that the number might rise to 27,000.

"(2) Changed the law to cut out the employees' vested property rights in early pension benefits, obligations that all other Ontario employers will have to continue to meet.

"(3) Changed the law to take away a right that all trade unions have had for a long time in Canada. Trade unions are entitled to retain their democratically won bargaining rights when an employer sells or transfers its businesses or service to another employer. This remains the case for all Ontario employers except the provincial government."

To digress, that's the issue of successor rights. I continue my quote.

"By unilateral action, the Harris government has not only attacked its employees' individual job rights and accrued benefits, but had also set out to undermine the union's viability. Only after it had done all this did it sit down to bargain.

"At the bargaining table, the government is adding insult to injury. It seeks to dilute employees' bumping rights—the seniority provisions the union had won over time. Further, it demands that from now on, classifications are to be solely managerial decisions. As bargaining over classifications had been of OPSEU's most visible activities on behalf of its members before it got the right to strike, this demand strikes at the heart of its existence."

I digress. For those who are watching, that paragraph by Professor Glasbeek says to me and to others who have read this that these actions constitute union-busting by the Harris government. I continue to quote:

"Having loaded the dice, the government purports to be bargaining in good faith as the law requires it to do. To prove good faith, the employer must show some willingness to do a deal: so the government has offered a little money by way of wage increases. But money cannot be the issue when jobs and the union's life are at stake."

1700

That is why when people see the placards of the strikers outside of buildings that house government offices, many of those placards say, "This is not about money." This strike is not about money.

"The thrust of the government's bargaining strategy should now be manifest: It wants to undermine the union. This fight is not just about cutting the deficit. After all, even if the government had done none of these things, there would have been 12,000 fewer employees by the year 2000 as a result of built-in attrition. None of this costly fighting, public inconvenience and political upheaval was necessary if the only goal was to reduce the size of the public sector's payroll."

I digress again as I say you will note that the 12,000 number as quoted by Professor Glasbeek is identical to the 12,000 number contained in the Liberal policy platform. We recognize that government indeed must get smaller. We recognize that there is a serious debt and deficit problem. But it was not necessary to bust the union, to undermine free collective bargaining, to, as Professor Glasbeek says, load the dice. It was not necessary to do any of this if it had not been for the astounding 30% cut in income tax rates and the promise to begin to do that in the first budget. That is what is driving the government's 33% cut in its own estimates account and that is where the 27,000 number comes from, because

when you reduce government's expenditure by 33%, the equivalent number is 27,000.

The Common Sense Revolution talked about 13,000 jobs, and what they said was that the 13,000 jobs were the equivalent of a 15% reduction in government expenditure. The estimates presented by the Treasurer said it would be in excess of 13,000 jobs because it would be not a 15% reduction, as they had advertised in their election propaganda, but in fact would be in excess of 30%. That is the reason that the members of OPSEU and AMAPCEO—those are the workers of the provincial government—are feeling betrayed and that's why they're feeling angry.

I continue to quote from Professor Glasbeek:

"The Harris government is taking its cue from its role models, the Thatcher and Reagan governments. Both instigated strikes to bust major trade unions. Both aimed to make trade unions look as if they weren't appropriate in a modern economy, one where employers would have all the bargaining power their wealth gives them vis-à-vis an unorganized labour force. The defeat of a significant trade union stiffens the spine of employers in the private sector.

"In Premier Harris's Ontario there is an additional agenda. The government hopes to reduce the centrality of government, and to give private companies some new avenues for profit as they inherit the right to deliver services people must have. Of course, the abolition of successor rights makes the purchase of government services cheaper."

We have seen many examples of privatization that have done nothing more than reduce and drive down the wages of those people delivering the services. That, it's suggested, is the hidden agenda, the privatization agenda of this government and the union-busting agenda of the government.

"We are taught to think of public service employees as fat, lazy and inefficient. The government feels, therefore, that their employees will not get much public sympathy. Further, as this is a union inexperienced in striking, the government no doubt expected that OPSEU's members would reject a call for a strike, which would have killed the union then and there. To the government's obvious dismay, this did not happen.

"Now the government hopes (because it holds a trump card; it can always use its legislative power to impose an agreement) that many OPSEU members will go back to work and cross picket lines to do so. If this happens, it will also harm the union greatly. The government may even be hoping that there will be some serious accidents or jail riots, and that the public will blame the workers whose lack of willingness to work may be portrayed as the immediate cause of hardship and harm—rather than the government that has put the workers in a position to do this kind of harm.

"The government seeks, by a carefully orchestrated attack on its own employees, to unravel decades of progress made by all of Ontario's workers. For all of our sakes, and for the sake of democracy, we must hope OPSEU can hang on long enough for the public to be aware of the danger that these draconian government tactics present."

Members of this Legislature have talked about rhetoric, but I would suggest to you that this very thoughtful article by H.J. Glasbeek, who is a professor emeritus at Osgoode Hall Law School, York University, should be sobering thoughts for all members of this Legislature.

I have listened as this debate has gone on and I'm very concerned that as we debate the estimates and have this opportunity to rise in the House to raise issues of concern, the members of the government caucus are not fully aware of just how devastating and serious will be their policies as they relate to their own employees. No strike is good for anyone. It is my hope that this will be solved through collective bargaining at the bargaining table. I do not believe that imposed solutions or solutions that are come to as a result of holding a gun to someone's head will result in the kind of vibrant public sector that will be feeling good about what it does.

I thought Professor Glasbeek said it well, because unfortunately too many people in the public of Ontario do not value the work that is provided to them by the civil service in the province of Ontario. I'm not going to say to you that all is perfect. I have served in government and I have worked with many of those dedicated, conscientious, competent public service employees, those who are dedicated and have dedicated themselves to serve the public and the public interest and the government of the day. The morale of those employees is extremely important.

During these estimates and during this debate, I would urge the government not only to solve its problems at the collective bargaining table but also to send out a message that it will not in conscience accept violence. We have seen peaceful protestors provoked, and that does not serve Ontario well.

I would also say to this government that there is not only an opportunity to settle this strike peacefully, but there is also an opportunity to send a clear message, because labour instability is not a climate for economic growth. If you want to say to the world, and you should, that Ontario is a vibrant economy and a good place to invest and a good place to do business, you must send a message that good labour-management and good employment practices are valued in this province. The government can serve and set by example that climate, and they have not done so today, and they should be criticized, and they should change their ways before it is too late.

1710

I sat here in the House today, on March 18, the first day that we have been here since before the Christmas recess in middle December, and I heard the ministers as they stood to respond to question period not be accurate in their answers, and I charge you, Mr Speaker, to hold those ministers accountable for accuracy, because the rhetoric gets in the way.

I've been very careful in my remarks to not be inflammatory, to be thoughtful and to be concerned, and I hope that the members of the government caucus will heed this message. During my quotations I mentioned that what is driving the fiscal agenda of the Common Sense Revolution is an astounding tax cut, and we have heard time and again of the government's determination to move forward. I would like to put on the record some thoughts

of others to remind Premier Harris and this government that while they may believe that it is macho to stand there and say, "We will not blink," what the people of the province want is a government that is responsive and responsible, a government that will listen to the best advice, and I would say that there are some quotes that would be very helpful.

On the tax cut, recently we had a legislative committee who took advice from numerous presenters, and my concern is that the government is not heeding that advice. In the Toronto Star dated March 14, I think there was an excellent editorial entitled "The High Price of the Harris Tax Cut." The editorial starts with this question:

"Would you like a 30% provincial income tax cut? Of course you would. Who wouldn't?"

"Would you also like Queen's Park to slash services by 33% more than it has already announced? Most Ontarians wouldn't.

"But that's the price Mike Harris forgot to tell you about during the election campaign when he promised his 30% income tax cut. He said he could slash taxes and balance the budget with a grand total of \$6 billion in expenditure cuts.

"Harris already has cut spending by \$8 billion, and according to WEFA Canada Inc, an economic consulting firm, he'll either have to cut \$2.6 billion more or forget about the deficit and let Ontario's debt grow another 40%.

"Harris talks about his tax cut putting money into the economy. But when all the spending cuts needed to pay for it are taken into account, 'the bottom line,' according to Bank of Montreal economist" and I can't pronounce his name but for the record it's Wojciech Szadurski, and I apologize to him for my inability to correctly pronounce his name, he said, "is that money will be taken out of the economy by a tax cut." The bottom line is that that money will be taken out of the economy by a tax cut.

"That view is shared by many economists who believe that worried consumers are more likely to use the tax cut to pay down their debts than to go on a shopping spree. And that, says Jayson Meyers of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association, means that the proposed tax cut won't do anything to stimulate job creation.

"For these reasons, every economist and business group appearing before the Legislature's finance committee in pre-budget hearings expressed some degree of caution over the Harris tax cut.

"During the election campaign, Harris made the tax cut sound as if he was offering something for nothing. But everything has a price. And the price of his tax cut is a massive reduction in public services and/or bigger deficits that keep adding to the debt.

"So we'll put the question again, but this time with the qualifications Harris neglected to mention the first time around.

"Do you want a 30% tax cut that will precipitate even more teacher layoffs and hospital budget cuts or a hefty increase in the provincial debt; that will lead to higher property tax and more user fees; that won't spur job creation; and that will suck money out of the economy instead of pumping it up?"

That's the editorial from the Toronto Star dated March 14, and that is the question that I believe Ontarians must ponder and ask themselves and let the Premier know how they feel. Because, according to Mike McCracken, the president of Informetrica, one cost of the tax cut would be the loss of 200,000 jobs by the end of the Tories' term in office and according to him the spending cuts introduced by the Conservatives to date will cost the economy 30,000 jobs in 1996-97.

We heard, and we saw very clearly in this document that was circulated in Oriole riding in this past election, we heard and we saw and we read of the government's plan to create 725,000 new jobs. They were very clear on that. They were clear that when they reduced the size of the civil service, they would have jobs for these people in the private sector.

Every bit of evidence is suggesting that Ontario's economy is not growing the way that it should in order to see job creation happening in the private sector, and so people are worried and that is why they are not spending. Someone said to me, "What good is a tax cut to me if I lose my job and I have no income?" and I had no answer for them, because they are now beginning to understand that there is no common sense in this revolutionary document.

But probably the single most important concern, after their individual security, their own job and will it be there for them tomorrow and for their neighbour and what will be the effect on their community of the policies of this government, probably the single most significant concern of the people of this province, and I know in Oriole riding, is medicare, health care in Ontario. And as Health critic, I can tell you that during the questioning of the Minister of Health at committee during time for estimates, the answers were inadequate.

When I look at the promises that were made, "Under this plan"—they were very clear, under the Common Sense Revolution—"there will be no new user fees." May 3, 1994. "We will not cut health care spending. The budget for health care, currently at \$17.3 billion will be sealed, and we're the only ones to make this financial commitment to health care."

The suggestion was that they would take the budget they inherited as they inherited it and they would seal it. Well, the budget they inherited was \$17.8 billion. Everyone knows that the expectation that everyone had was that not one cent would be cut from that, and yet we know from the estimate projections that in fact that's exactly what is happening. We know that health spending has been cut already by \$1.5 billion, with the bulk of the cuts coming in the hospital sector.

The Conservatives acknowledged, in a response to the Ontario Hospital Association, when they said: "We will allocate more resources to community-based services to enable people to live in their own homes for as long as possible. We will not reduce hospital services until alternate support systems are available in the community."

1720

I said at the beginning of my remarks that they say one thing and they do another, that their actions do not result from their promises and their words. Their deeds and their actions are not consistent with what they have said

they would do, because we have not seen the focus on services. We have not seen communities such as Windsor, which just received an announcement that was long overdue that they would have \$48 million for the capital construction of their hospital reconfiguration—they have not had a commitment to ensure the community that community-based services will be there as part of that reconfiguration.

I say to this government, if you are going to assure the people of this province that not only are you going to do what you said you would do, but that you understand what is needed for the health of this province, you must be aware that health and economic prosperity go hand in hand, that your economic and fiscal policies and your social policies have an impact one to the other, that you must not cut one penny from health care, and we will be watching the budget that will be tabled by your Minister of Finance and your Premier and we will hold you responsible if you cut one nickel from the health account. Because we know that the cuts you are making are to see a redistribution of wealth from the most vulnerable and the poorest in our society to the best-off in our society.

I say to you, that is not healthy public policy, that is not good for Ontario, and you have little time to reconsider before you do enormous damage to this province.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I have to begin by saying it's kind of perverse to be here today and to be discussing these estimates. It's an incredibly empty process, and I'll explain what I mean in a moment, but it's also perverse given what we've seen going on outside in the streets of Toronto today and the streets around Queen's Park, the numbers of people who were here protesting the loss of thousands and thousands of jobs in this province, loss of vital services. And why? So that we can finance a 30% tax break that the Conservative Party wants to give to the wealthiest of their friends in this province.

I say it's perverse and I say this is an empty process because we have in front of us today a set of estimates that have been tabled that are for this year's expenditures that haven't even been updated to reflect appropriately the announcements of the spending cuts you've already made, let alone, when your ministers came before the committee on estimates, any projection of where your cuts were going to be, in what ministries, in what areas, any detail at all with respect to what was in your economic statement that you were going to cut over a third of the payroll in the Ontario public service. No details of that, no information.

If I could say so, this is the hallmark of this government, a government that proceeds without any consultation, without wanting to listen to anybody or get any advice, without providing anyone with any decent basis of information on which to respond to your plans. We see this over and over again. We see the way you treat legislation in the House, the way you treated the opposition with respect to bills like Bill 7. Ram it through: no debate, no committee, no hearings. We saw what you did on Bill 26 and the extraordinary efforts that it took on the part of members of the opposition to force a process in which you'd have to listen to some members of the public. We know that even then that was inadequate.

There were hundreds of people who were denied an opportunity to be heard, who wanted to present as we travelled the province and as we held hearings here in Toronto and were denied that opportunity because of your bully tactics, because of your arrogant approach, because you're going to ram through your agenda no matter what the cost, no matter what the information.

In some ways I feel badly saying this to the members opposite, because most of them are members of the back bench and quite frankly I don't think they have any more information than members of the opposition do. The cabinet's just doing things behind closed doors. It's exactly what we said would happen as a result of Bill 26: taking more and more powers on to the cabinet, less and less consultation, less and less openness of government. This is a government that has closed the doors: closed the doors to the public, closed the doors to the opposition and, I suspect, closed the doors on the backbenchers of the Tory caucus as well.

If I can just take this a step further for many of you who weren't at the finance committee hearings and talk about the consultation we had with the Minister of Finance in the pre-budget hearings, you may know that every year it is traditional that at the standing committee on finance and economic affairs the minister comes forward and presents information with respect to his planning for the budget. The underpinnings of the budget planning process are presented to that committee.

Interjection.

Ms Lankin: Someone is saying over there, "The wrong committee." If you don't realize that there is a connection between estimates and the budget, then we've got a lot of education to do here.

Mr Pouliot: It will come.

Ms Lankin: It will come. With time, it will come.

He came forward before that committee and refused—absolutely refused—to provide that committee with any kind of information on which they could respond and give advice to the Minister of Finance with respect to his budget planning. Now, sitting here two seats over from me, the member for Nickel Belt, the former Minister of Finance, went through an incredible effort every year in opening up the budgeting process to involve people in this province—not just the finance committee, not just members of the Legislature, but I can tell you this: He made a full presentation that included information on projections of the future on revenues; projections on expenditure; where the pressures were; what it looked like in terms of the deficit trends; what the economic growth trends were; all of those things which would allow the members of the opposition to provide their advice based on detailed information that the Ministry of Finance has at its fingertips, to provide that advice based on some real information. That was cut out. But not only did the member for Nickel Belt, when he was the Minister of Finance, consult in an open way with the finance committee and members of the Legislative Assembly, he went out across the province and met with people across the province in pre-budget consultations year after year after year.

Quite frankly, this government has said: "No, no, no, we're not going to be bothered doing that. Two weeks,

we'll have the standing committee here listen to some folks and then we'll completely ignore the recommendations of the people who came forward." And you are, because if you read that report from the standing committee, you will see the compendium of all of the presentations that came forward, all of the economists, all of the expert witnesses who said: "This government is putting our economy in danger of sliding into another very, very deep recession. This government is putting us in danger of thousands of jobs being lost. This government is putting us in danger of not reaching our fiscal targets in terms of deficit reduction and eventually a balanced budget by the year 2000. This government should be very, very cautious about proceeding with its tax cut at this point in time because the indications are the market's soft, the economy's soft, revenues are down. We don't think you can do it."

This government is saying, "To heck with all of that" and the members of the government put forward their recommendation despite what they heard, not just from all the ordinary folks who came forward, those people they think are special interests whom they write off, but from all of the expert witnesses who came forward including, I might add, the expert witnesses the Tory caucus put forward. You're not even listening to your own experts. You're not listening to anyone. In fact, what you are doing is providing people with a whole lot of misinformation rather than real information. Let me give you some examples.

I was appalled today to hear the minister for Management Board stand up and rail in response to a question from the leader of the official opposition, talking about the size of the civil service and defending his actions which have absolutely provoked the OPSEU strike—defending that by saying: "In 1985 there were X number of public service workers in the Ontario public service and five years later, in 1990, there were 8,000 more. It had bloated; it had grown. We've got to do something about it." We were all over here saying: "No, no, no. Dave, tell us, what was it in 1995 when you took over? Give us all of the information." But he refused to do that.

Mr Laughren: Not a chance.

Ms Lankin: Not a chance. He wouldn't give us that information. He wouldn't give the public that information, and probably hasn't told you, so let me tell you. In 1985, there were 81,000 people employed in the Ontario public service. In 1995, there were 81,000 people employed in the Ontario public service.

1730

You see, it didn't begin with you guys, the idea of restructuring the way in which public services are delivered, trying to streamline, trying to deal with a reorganization of how services are delivered. And it didn't begin with you guys looking at how many layers of management there are and what kind of de-layering needed to take place and how we learn from some of the things that have happened in the corporate sector. That didn't begin with the Tories. But you went out with an ideological document, your Common Sense Revolution, and you said, "We're going to take it back to 1985 numbers." You forgot to check what the new numbers were. Now you're in the situation where you're going to

cut even deeper than you intended, you're going to lay off even more people than you intended and you're going to take us back not to 1985—because we're already there—you're going to take us back to 1952 in terms of the size of the civil service, for a population that has grown dramatically.

Think through what you're doing. Why don't you deal with some facts for a change instead of just, "I believe in what's in the Common Sense Revolution"? You should challenge yourselves with reality from time to time, challenge yourselves with facts. You might come to a point where you realize you need to make some changes in the plans that you had. When you're governing, you govern the province as it is, not based on some ideology. You take a look at the real facts: what's the situation that's facing you, what are the steps you should take, what's reasonable, what's the response going to be to the steps you're taking as a government with respect to the economy?

Let's take a look at some of the facts. You said you were going to lay off 13,000 people. Quite frankly, we now know, looking at the documents the Minister of Finance tabled in November, that you intend to cut over 30% of the payroll. That doesn't translate into 13,000 people. Everyone wonders where this number of 27,000 comes from. My friends, that's where it comes from: 33% of payroll being cut—it's right there in the document that the minister put forward—translates into somewhere between 25,000 and 29,000 people, depending on salary rates and how high a salary or how low a salary is. That's the number it translates into.

So why don't you tell us what your plans are? When we tried to ask the Minister of Finance—no information; wouldn't provide us with any information, wouldn't confirm the numbers, wouldn't tell us what his intent was. When we tried to ask every minister coming before estimates—no information; wouldn't confirm, wouldn't tell us.

Misinformation is being provided day in and day out by this government. Let's take a look at what's actually happening in the economy right now. You have the Common Sense Revolution based on projected economic growth of about 4.5%. Do you know what the expected economic growth for 1995 actually is? It's 2.5%.

Unemployment out there is running at 8.9%, despite the extraordinary misinformation we heard from the Premier today that you're on track for the creation of 725,000 new jobs. What a joke. All of the projections, all of the people who have come forward, who testified before the finance committee, all of the people who have speculated on what's happening in the economy, have said that we're looking at very weak employment numbers for the next year to two years out. Where does the Premier come up with these mythical, hopeful projections that don't accord with any of the real information? Provide people with real information, not smoke and mirrors, not misinformation.

The drag in the economy from the cuts that you are making, the deep cuts in public sector spending, is causing us to slip back to the edge of dropping off into a recession again. We heard from expert witness after expert witness, testimony after testimony, that the econ-

omy is so fragile right now that the depth of the cuts you are making is taking money out of the economy. The public sector is part of the economy. That money that's spent by government circulates in the economy. It provides people with employment wages, for example, which they then go out and spend in the corner stores and in retail operations and in buying cars, whatever. You're taking that money out of the economy. So there's a drag on the economy, there's a slowing down on the economy as a result of that, and we heard time and time again that we are dangerously close to sliding over the precipice down into another recession.

The thing that is driving the depth and the speed of your cuts, which by the way are going to be \$5 billion to \$6 billion to \$8 billion more than you projected in the Common Sense Revolution, is your absolute ideological commitment to providing this tax break that is going to benefit the wealthiest in the province. I've got to wonder why. Why would you keep down this road?

All of the experts said to be cautious on that tax cut. One of two things is going to happen: You're going to have to cut deeper and deeper in order to make up the money for that if you're going to reach your deficit targets and balance the budget by 2000, or you're going to miss your deficit targets. We keep hearing from the Premier and the Finance minister, "No, there's no way we're going to miss our deficit targets." I guess that means you're going to break every other promise you made. We have already seen \$2 billion being cut from health care, which you promised not to cut. We've already seen \$400 million in the first tranche of cuts from classroom education, and it's going to grow; we know it's going to be \$1 billion-plus in terms of education. We've already seen cuts in law enforcement which are bringing us dangerously close to levels of police officers that can't secure the safety of our communities.

What is the kind of Ontario that you have a vision for? It's incredible when we see the direction that you're going. You are ripping the heart out of Ontario, and for what reason? You break every promise in your Common Sense Revolution, and for what reason? To keep one promise and one promise only—that promise for the 30% tax break, fully two thirds of which will go to families earning over \$90,000 a year. That's not going to help middle-income earners; it's not going to help low-income earners. We know they're going to feel the pressure of huge new user fees that they're going to have to pay, higher property taxes as a result of your cuts of transfers to the municipalities.

You took welfare recipients and cut by 22% the incomes of people who spend every dollar they have in the economy. You cut them by 22%. You froze minimum wage. You took away access to pay equity for the poorest-paid women in this province. What is the theory here? Obviously, it's to depress wages. Obviously, it's to create a whole pool of workers who are going to work as cheap labour. It's no different than what you've done with OPSEU. Why is OPSEU out there on strike? Good Lord, you took a piece of legislation and included in it stripping their legal rights to follow their job with their contract if you privatize their work.

Every private sector employer and every private sector employee in a unionized workplace is covered by that kind of legislation and you exempt yourselves as an employer and say: "Our employees, it doesn't matter. We're not going to give them that protection in terms of job security." Why? It's hard to tell because the Premier today said, "We don't really have any plans. We're not committed to privatization," but he said, "We're not committed to not looking at privatization either." What does that mean? Double negative; sounds like you're committed to privatization. But let's give him the benefit of the doubt. If he's right and you don't have the plans for privatization, then why did you include stripping the public sector workforce of successor rights legislation back last fall? I don't believe it for a moment that you don't have those plans.

The thing that really, really disturbs me is the fact that you could restore successor rights, you could restore that protection and it wouldn't cost the public purse a penny. It doesn't cost anything if you're privatizing jobs. You're sending them out to somebody else. It doesn't cost you anything if that contract and those workers go with those jobs. Who does it cost? The friends you've got lined up down on Bay Street who are going to benefit from this fire sale of assets of the public that you have intended for us over the course of the next year.

A lot of people are going to pay through the nose. When you privatize Hydro, you will see consumer rates go up. You can see in the north it's going to devastate northern communities. In rural Ontario, dairy farmers, small business and small towns will pay more as a result. Who's going to benefit? The folks down on Bay Street. Over \$1 billion is going to be made in fees from the sales and from all of the stocks and bonds and all of the process that you go through when you're divesting an asset like this.

It would be a good test for the public, every time they listen to you make an announcement, for them to ask themselves the question, "Who benefits from this?" It would be very illustrative, because I think they would see time and time again it's the wealthiest people of this province, it's the people who are the friends of the Mike Harris Tories, it's the people on Bay Street, it's the people in corporate offices. Over and over again those are the people who are going to benefit. And who hurts? The people with the lowest incomes, the people in middle income, people who are just scraping to try and get by and keep their families whole and safe, every time. Ask yourself that question: Who benefits? Who loses?

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So we have a situation where the experts all say the tax cut won't provide any stimulation in the economy. At the most, we might see maybe 50,000 jobs created over some two or three years from that tax cut. But at the same time we're going to see 147,000 to 175,000 jobs lost as a result of the cuts in public sector spending. So there's an obvious net loss of employment that you're causing at the same time you promised to create 725,000 jobs.

Again, the Premier today said, "Elect a Tory government and confidence will return and investment will flood in and that's all you need to do and everything will be

fine." Where is that confidence? Let me tell you, that slow economy, that increase in unemployment as we see people starting to look for more work and trying to flood back in when jobs aren't being created, all of that says to most people: "Gee, I'm not sure I should go out and spend right now. Gee, maybe I should save a little bit."

You guys are scratching your heads and saying: "Why isn't the consumer bounding back and out there in the retail market? Where's the consumer confidence?" Let me tell you, folks are sitting at home around the kitchen table right now with one of their kids in bed and looking at their budget, and it's in a family where one person works, and they're saying, "We can't afford this any more. We're going to have to both go out to work," or people are out every day on the OPSEU picket line fighting for their jobs, or young teachers are worried that they're going to be laid off. Do you think these people are going to go out and spend?

Students are training for a job that they don't have any belief will ever be there for them. People who are worried about losing their jobs aren't going to go out and spend. People who don't have a job can't go out and spend. You guys just don't get it. You keep going down a path which is pushing us closer and closer to a recession.

My friends, let me tell you that the recession that we will be seeing will be almost as deep in its impact on people as the Great Depression. The only thing that will make a difference are the social programs and social networks that have been built up for years and years and years in this province which you are trying to dismantle as quickly as you can. That is the difference between a depression and a recession. That is the difference in terms of how people experience those changes in the economy. It's the social programs, the social safety net that has been created that protects families.

Think back to the days of the Depression. If you're not old enough, read about it. Ask a relative about it. Find out about the hardships that people suffered as they stood in soup lines, as they stood looking for work, as they got on trains to travel to parts far away to try and find some employment to provide for their families, about the disintegration of families, of communities, of neighbourhoods.

After that, a number of people in this country said, "Never again." People like Stanley Knowles and Tommy Douglas and many, many others of all political stripes said, "Never again," and they set us on a course to building the fine, incredible country that we live in today, which, my friends, you are dismantling.

You keep saying it's about money; you keep saying it's about the deficit. If it was, you wouldn't be proceeding with this tax cut. At some point in time, the public is going to start to see through the sham of this argument, the sham of the Common Sense Revolution, of the mantra that you repeat over and over and over again, the sham of, "We've got to do this because we're spending \$1 million more an hour than we're taking in."

Let me tell you, once you borrow the \$27.8 billion that you're going to have to borrow to make up for the lost revenue between now and the year 2000 as a result of this tax cut that you're giving, over two thirds of which

is going to families over \$90,000, do you realize that you're going to be spending—

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): How much per hour?

Ms Lankin: How much per hour? Thank you for asking. You knew I was going to tell you that. Just under three quarters of a million dollars an hour just to pay for that tax cut. Come on. There is no common sense in that. This does not make sense. You're prolonging the time in which we could arrive at a balanced budget. You're cutting deeper and faster than you need to. Let's come back to the reason why.

Why is it that you're prepared to break every single promise in the Common Sense Revolution except that one? It's not because it makes sense economically, because all of the experts who came before the committee said no. In fact, your Finance minister couldn't even answer the question about what kind of economic stimulus this tax cut would provide. When we asked him, "In the first year, second year?" he said, "Well no, probably not." "Beyond that?" "Well yes, we think so." "What will it be?" "I don't know. I don't have those numbers, but I believe—I believe—that it will do it"—true believers in the Common Sense Revolution. This is an ideology that you're believing in, but there are no facts to substantiate it.

I come back to the reason why. Why are you prepared to proceed to break every promise you made in the Common Sense Revolution to the public of Ontario except the one for the tax cut? I suspect it's because Mike Harris said—he probably would regret it now and think of it as a moment of weakness or stupidity or something—"If I don't keep that promise, I'll resign." So you're all screwing around, living up to an ideology and to a promise to try and protect your Premier.

Do you know what you're doing on the other side in order to protect your Premier or in order to live up to that promise? Thousands upon thousands of workers are going to lose their jobs. Thousands upon thousands of families are going to lose that economic security. The very fabric of our neighbourhoods and our communities is being ripped apart by the actions you're taking and the cuts you're making in order to pay for this tax cut. Thousands of people can suffer in this province as far as you're concerned. For what reason? To save one guy's job. To save Mike Harris's job. "Shame, absolute shame."

It is time that you listened to what people of this province are saying. It is time that you stepped back and took a deep breath and said, "Look, we're heading down a road of ideology here that doesn't work when you're trying to govern a complex, large industrial province, a province where you need to have some balance between what the markets do and what the governments do."

I'm tired of hearing you folks say, "Let the markets do it all." Let me tell you there's something incredibly perverse about the markets that would see, last week, the markets respond to good employment news with a mini-crash. There's something perverse about markets that respond to a major downsizing announcement by a corporation by seeing their stocks shoot to the sky. There's something perverse about that.

When we were in the finance committee hearings, the chief economist for Canada Trust came forward and did this whole bit about the markets and how they—primarily US markets—were responding to the Harris government, and all the Tory backbenchers there were just so pleased and delighted that the markets liked the Tory government. They felt all warm and fuzzy as a result of that. This was good news.

I said to her: "When the markets are looking at this promise of the tax cut or this promise of the deficit being reduced at this point in time, are the markets also, by the way, looking at the devastation of our health care system, which is one of the main competitive edges we have over the US in terms of attracting industry and the cost of production? Are the markets looking at the complete desecration of an education system that now is in place and produces good-quality-educated workers for those corporations that are going to come in and invest? Do the markets take account of the loss of security in our neighbourhoods and the increase in crime as a result of increased poverty and greater polarization in the distribution of wealth in our society?" She said: "No, no. The markets don't look at that. Those are things that are of concern to us as citizens who live here, but not to the markets."

That's why we have governments. We have governments to intervene, not to hand over our province to the US-driven markets. You take that information into account, but you don't bend on knees to them. You don't worship at the feet of the markets. You have a job to do which is to protect people, which is to intervene, which is to ensure that there's a distribution of the wealth that comes from the resources, the natural resources and the human resources, of this country. You have a role as a government. You're abandoning that role when you are proceeding hell-bent on introducing this tax cut, no matter what, to save Mike Harris's job.

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Premier Harris is a very nice person and Premier Harris, I'm sure, doesn't want to lose his job. Neither do the thousands upon thousands of people who were on the lawns today, who were walking picket lines all around this province, or the teachers—who know they're next—the hospital workers, the municipal workers. You've set this province on a course of absolute chaos and confrontation. How do you think that appeals to those people you want to come in and invest in this province?

My friends, you've got some serious thinking to do. These estimates, unfortunately, are not a forum for you to deal with those very serious questions facing your government. But you have a month or two before your Finance minister introduces his budget. You have caucus meeting after caucus meeting where you should be putting these issues to him and you should be demanding answers.

He wouldn't tell us how much a tax cut was going to cost. I told him, "You can tell us right now what the yield per tax point is." I know that information's available. I sat around the treasury board table. I was there with the member for Nickel Belt time after time when he presented that information. I know it's available. "No, no, no, not available. Can't give it to you." But who did you

give it to? We saw it in the document today that you filed with the US Securities and Exchange Commission. You tell the folks down in the States information that you won't share with the people of Ontario. It's amazing.

It's an amazing government that's producing amazing times in this province, and I worry. I worry for the future of Ontario. I worry for what Ontario will look like after Mike Harris. I took a ride to the airport when I was going out on committee hearings with a taxi driver who said that you guys are like a neutron bomb that's been dropped on this province. The thing that happens after a neutron bomb, when the smoke and the dust clears, is that nothing grows for a long, long time. I worry about our Ontario after Mike Harris. Think it through. Rethink it. Do the right thing in the budget.

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): I spent two weeks sitting on the estimates committee, and as soon as you sit on the estimates committee for a very, very short time, you realize in fact that estimates is the last thing on everybody's mind. It's due in part to the fact that the estimates that we were looking at were really those of the previous government and weren't really reflective of our government's position, and partly because the estimates committee appears to be a forum for members to restate their parties' positions on various topics.

However, it was an informative and interesting experience for me. I'd like to focus my remarks today on two particular ministries. The first one is the Ministry of Community and Social Services. Minister Tsubouchi was present for 15 hours of estimates and began by stating the ministry's vision, which I would like to quote for you.

"That vision is an effective and affordable service system which supports and invests in families and communities to be responsible and accountable, where adults are as independent as possible, a society where children are safe and where support is provided to people most in need."

The minister also noted that the estimates we were referring to were from the previous government and would be dramatically different next time around.

Welfare of course was the major topic of discussion. In 1985 the welfare rolls were at 476,000 cases. By June 1995 they had grown to around 1.3 million cases. Approximately one in every 10 people in Ontario was supported by the welfare system. By the end of 1995 the government of Ontario was spending approximately \$6.6 billion on welfare.

Our government was determined to change this. The minister acted quickly and took steps to address the welfare issue. By lowering welfare benefits 21.6%, it brought welfare benefits in Ontario more in line with the rest of the other provinces. Welfare benefits in Ontario are still 10% higher than the average of the rest of the provinces, but welfare recipients have the opportunity of earning back the difference without penalty.

Steps have also been taken to tighten eligibility and combat fraud in the system. Our government firmly believes that welfare should be a last resort for people, but it must be preserved and protected in order to ensure that it does not become a way of life for generations of Ontarians but in fact is a social assistance system for those who truly need support.

The Ontario Works program which the minister is working towards was discussed in some detail, and it was confirmed to us that it will be a program designed specifically for Ontarians, a made-in-Ontario solution, because it's clear that the best program for welfare recipients is a job.

The last major topic that was dealt with under the Ministry of Community and Social Services was the child care issue. The previous NDP government had spent \$52 million by June 8 on the conversion of private child care centres to non-profit centres, but with all that money not a single new space was created. This government will spend up to \$549.5 million on child care this year and includes available funding for up to 14,000 Jobs Ontario child care fee subsidies. The minister also confirmed that 71% of the child care operating budget will be set aside to help low-income parents so they can continue to work and avoid reliance on social assistance. Minister Tsubouchi is committed to improving child care options for parents so they can choose the kind of care they want for their children, whether it be institutional, formal or informal, and the minister will do this by making better use of taxpayers' dollars.

The other ministry that I'd like to comment on is the Housing ministry. Minister Leach attended 15 hours of the estimates committee also, and was quick to tell us that the estimates of the Housing were not those of his government but were from the previous government's disastrous housing policy.

In fact, major changes in the Housing ministry have taken place since June 1995. Almost 400 non-profit projects were cancelled immediately, saving almost \$500 million over the next five years. While stating that 100,000 units of non-profit housing were added since 1985, the minister pointed out that continuation of this program would have cost the taxpayers of Ontario more than \$1 billion a year every year. It is not fiscally responsible to burden the taxpayer with that kind of debt.

The estimates tabled by the previous government were a program for spending. The Provincial Auditor has criticized the non-profit housing program since its inception, based on the way the program was managed and operated. Minister Leach stated that the housing problems could be handled in a far better way, a way that doesn't put a crushing burden on the taxpayer.

The Provincial Auditor found huge discrepancies in the non-profit housing program. Our government is committed to replacing the existing social housing system with a shelter allowance program, believing that a shelter subsidy is fairer, because it subsidizes the person and not the unit. It will offer support to the neediest people, not just the ones lucky enough to get to the top of the waiting list. It allows people to choose where they want to live.

A great deal of discussion at the estimates committee centred around rent controls and the effect of removal of rent control on those least likely to afford increases in rent. Minister Leach stated over and over that he meets continually with tenants and landlords alike to discuss rental housing. Rent control is not working. Old stock is crumbling, nobody's building new buildings and the vacancy rate is very low and falling.

Minister Leach is working towards a new system that gives renters housing choices and protection and one that gives landlords incentives to invest in new buildings and maintain their old ones. Even the member for Scarborough North, who was at one point Minister of Housing for the Liberal government, put the best case for change when he stated:

"As a landlord, you have failed. As a landlord, when I was there, I failed. As a landlord, as the Minister of Housing, as we go through, we fail. We have not brought decent, affordable housing to the people of this province, and we must fix that. So I commend you to looking with respect to fixing the rental housing aspect in our province."

Minister Leach has stated that he would like to bring forward a complete package of reform which will include the Ontario Housing Corp, rent supplements and ways to encourage the private sector to build as well as the non-profit program. The minister assured the committee that the 1996-97 estimates, which will come before this

committee later this spring, will demonstrate quite a different approach. The Ministry of Housing will no longer tolerate abuse, nor will it subsidize inefficiency.

This government will make the kinds of changes that reflect a new way of governing, a way that respects the financial realities and encourages the private sector to play a greater role. The Provincial Auditor was pleased that the government was prepared to reduce government spending in both the community and social services area and in the housing area as well, but also stated that there was a great deal more to do.

I look forward to reviewing the estimates after the spring session, as I'm sure the numbers will be more accurate and the auditor's report will be more favourable to the actions the government will take. I look forward to the next committee meeting.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): It being almost 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 1801.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Lt Col The Hon / L'hon Henry N.R. Jackman CM, KStJ, BA, LLB, LL.D

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Allan K. McLean

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Senior Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Journals / Greffier adjoint principal et Greffier des journaux: Alex D. McFedries

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees / Greffière adjointe et Greffière des comités: Deborah Deller

Sergeant at Arms / Sergent d'armes: Thomas Stelling

| Member / Député(e) | Constituency / Circonscription | Party / Parti | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|---|--------------------------------|---------------|--|
| Agostino, Dominic | Hamilton East / -Est | L | |
| Arnott, Ted | Wellington | PC | |
| Baird, John R. | Nepean | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre du Travail |
| Barrett, Toby | Norfolk | PC | |
| Bartolucci, Rick | Sudbury | L | |
| Bassett, Isabel | St Andrew-St Patrick | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, deputy government House leader / adjointe parlementaire du ministre des Finances, chef parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement |
| Beaubien, Marcel | Lambton | PC | parliamentary assistant (rural affairs) to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / adjoint parlementaire (secteur Affaires rurales) du ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales |
| Bisson, Gilles | Cochrane South / -Sud | ND | |
| Boushy, Dave | Sarnia | PC | |
| Boyd, Marion | London Centre / -Centre | ND | |
| Bradley, James J. | St Catharines | L | deputy opposition leader, opposition House leader / chef adjoint de l'opposition, chef parlementaire de l'opposition |
| Brown, Jim | Scarborough West / -Ouest | PC | |
| Brown, Michael A. | Algoma-Manitoulin | L | deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition |
| Caplan, Elinor | Oriole | L | chief opposition whip / whip en chef de l'opposition |
| Carr, Gary | Oakville South / -Sud | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / adjoint parlementaire du solliciteur général et du ministre des Services correctionnels |
| Carroll, Jack | Chatham-Kent | PC | |
| Castrilli, Annamarie | Downsview | L | |
| Chiarelli, Robert | Ottawa West / -Ouest | L | |
| Christopherson, David | Hamilton Centre / -Centre | ND | deputy New Democratic Party whip / whip adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique |
| Chudleigh, Ted | Halton North / -Nord | PC | |
| Churley, Marilyn | Riverdale | ND | Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Cleary, John C. | Cornwall | L | |
| Clement, Tony | Brampton South / -Sud | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs |
| Colle, Mike | Oakwood | L | |
| Conway, Sean G. | Renfrew North / -Nord | L | |
| Cooke, David S. | Windsor-Riverside | ND | New Democratic Party House leader / chef parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique |
| Cordiano, Joseph | Lawrence | L | |
| Crozier, Bruce | Essex South / -Sud | L | deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition |
| Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne | London North / -Nord | PC | Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine |
| Curling, Alvin | Scarborough North / -Nord | L | |

| Member / Député(e) | Constituency / Circonscription | Party / Parti | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|---|---|---------------|--|
| Danford, Harry | Hastings-Peterborough | PC | parliamentary assistant (agriculture and food) to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / adjoint parlementaire (secteurs Agriculture et Alimentation) du ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales |
| DeFaria, Carl | Mississauga East / -Est | PC | |
| Doyle, Ed | Wentworth East / -Est | PC | assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement |
| Duncan, Dwight | Windsor-Walkerville | L | |
| Ecker, Janet | Durham West / -Ouest | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services / adjointe parlementaire du ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires |
| Elliott, Hon / L'hon Brenda | Guelph | PC | Minister of Environment and Energy / ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Énergie |
| Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. | Parry Sound | PC | Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance, government House leader / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances, leader parlementaire du gouvernement |
| Fisher, Barbara | Bruce | PC | |
| Flaherty, Jim | Durham Centre / -Centre | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / adjoint parlementaire du ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce |
| Ford, Douglas B. | Etobicoke-Humber | PC | |
| Fox, Gary | Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings / Prince Edward-Lennox-Hastings-Sud | PC | |
| Froese, Tom | St Catharines-Brock | PC | |
| Galt, Doug | Northumberland | PC | parliamentary assistant (environment) to the Minister of Environment and Energy / adjoint parlementaire (secteur Environnement) de la ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Énergie |
| Gerretsen, John | Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles | L | |
| Gilchrist, Steve | Scarborough East / -Est | PC | |
| Grandmaître, Bernard | Ottawa East / -Est | L | |
| Gravelle, Michael | Port Arthur | L | |
| Grimmett, Bill | Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne | PC | parliamentary assistant (tourism) to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / adjoint parlementaire (secteur Tourisme) du ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme |
| Guzzo, Garry J. | Ottawa-Rideau | PC | parliamentary assistant (energy) to the Minister of Environment and Energy / adjoint parlementaire (secteur Énergie) de la ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Énergie |
| Hampton, Howard | Rainy River | ND | |
| Hardeman, Ernie | Oxford | PC | parliamentary assistant (municipal affairs – rural) to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / adjoint parlementaire (Affaires municipales – secteur rural) du ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement |
| Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles | Willowdale | PC | Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones |
| Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. | Nipissing | PC | Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif |
| Hastings, John | Etobicoke-Rexdale | PC | |
| Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris | Victoria-Haliburton | PC | Minister of Natural Resources, Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines |
| Hoy, Pat | Essex-Kent | L | |
| Hudak, Tim | Niagara South / -Sud | PC | |
| Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron | Burlington South / -Sud | PC | Minister without Portfolio (Workers' Compensation Board) / ministre sans portefeuille (Commission des accidents du travail) |
| Johns, Helen | Huron | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health / adjointe parlementaire du ministre de la Santé |

| Member / Député(e) | Constituency / Circonscription | Party / Parti | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|---------------------------------------|--|---------------|---|
| Johnson, Bert | Perth | PC | Deputy Speaker and Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président de la Chambre et Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Johnson, Hon / L'hon David | Don Mills | PC | Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion |
| Johnson, Ron | Brantford | PC | |
| Jordan, Leo | Lanark-Renfrew | PC | deputy government whip / whip adjoint du gouvernement |
| Kells, Morley | Etobicoke-Lakeshore | PC | |
| Klees, Frank | York-Mackenzie | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Richesses naturelles |
| Kormos, Peter | Welland-Thorold | ND | |
| Kwinter, Monte | Wilson Heights | L | |
| Lalonde, Jean-Marc | Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell | L | |
| Lankin, Frances | Beaches-Woodbine | ND | chief New Democratic Party whip / whip en chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique |
| Laughren, Floyd | Nickel Belt | ND | deputy New Democratic Party leader / chef adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique |
| Leach, Hon / L'hon Al | St George-St David | PC | Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement |
| Leadston, Gary L. | Kitchener-Wilmot | PC | |
| Marchese, Rosario | Fort York | ND | |
| Marland, Margaret | Mississauga South / -Sud | PC | |
| Martel, Shelley | Sudbury East / -Est | ND | |
| Martin, Tony | Sault Ste Marie | ND | |
| Martiniuk, Gerry | Cambridge | PC | |
| Maves, Bart | Niagara Falls | PC | |
| McGuinty, Dalton | Ottawa South / -Sud | L | |
| McLean, Hon / L'hon Allan K. | Simcoe East / -Est | PC | Speaker / Président |
| McLeod, Lyn | Fort William | L | Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition |
| Miclash, Frank | Kenora | L | deputy opposition House leader / chef parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition |
| Morin, Gilles E. | Carleton East / -Est | L | First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Munro, Julia | Durham-York | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Premier / adjointe parlementaire du premier ministre |
| Murdoch, Bill | Grey-Owen Sound | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire du ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines |
| Mushinski, Hon / L'hon Marilyn | Scarborough-Ellesmere | PC | Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs |
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| Parker, John L. | York East / -Est | PC | |
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| Pouliot, Gilles | Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon | ND | |
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| Pupatello, Sandra | Windsor-Sandwich | L | |
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| Ross, Lillian | Hamilton West / -Ouest | PC | assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement |
| Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. | Leeds-Grenville | PC | Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / solliciteur général et ministre des Services correctionnels |
| Ruprecht, Tony | Parkdale | L | |
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| Saunderson, Hon / L'hon William | Eglinton | PC | Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme |
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| Sheehan, Frank | Lincoln | PC | |
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Ces listes figurent dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et du premier lundi de chaque mois. Par contre, une liste des circonscriptions paraît si l'espace est disponible.

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Publication



No. 43

N° 43

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 19 March 1996

Mardi 19 mars 1996



Speaker
Honourable Allan K. McLean

Président
L'honorable Allan K. McLean

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 19 March 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 19 mars 1996

*The House met at 1332.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): I'd like to read to the members a news article that appeared in the Kirkland Lake Northern Daily News on March 15:

"Mother of Three Killed in Crash

"Road conditions played a significant role in an early-morning accident which claimed the life of a Larder Lake woman.

"Cheryl Duplin, 42, was killed Thursday when the vehicle she was driving was struck broadside by a truck.

"The multi-vehicle accident happened at about 6:35 am just east of the level railway crossing on Highway 66.

"The roads, at the time of the day in that certain section of the highway, were extremely icy," said Ontario Provincial Police Constable Thomas Batisse from the Swastika detachment who investigated the accident.

"The married woman and mother of three was driving westbound on Highway 66 about nine kilometres east of Kirkland Lake, followed by two vehicles, when she lost control on a curve and was hit by the car immediately behind her which caused minor damage to her Jeep.

"The cars careered to a stop with Mrs Duplin's vehicle coming to rest on the north shoulder of the highway almost blocking the westbound lane.

"Seconds later, it was hit on the passenger side by a third westbound vehicle which could not stop in time to avoid the collision."

The Kirkland Lake police, who shortly after arrived at the site, are investigating this.

At midnight tonight Ontario is expecting another major storm. I would say to the government members over there and all members of the Legislature that we would hope this strike is over soon so that we don't have to have other victims such as Cheryl across this province. We've got to get this province back again and we've got to start saving the lives of Ontarians.

COMMON SENSE REVOLUTION

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): In September when this House was called into session, angry demonstrators were confronted by police billy clubs. Yesterday when the House was reconvened, picketers engaged in a legal strike were confronted by an OPP riot squad. As Thomas Walkom said in his column in this morning's Toronto Star, "It was a pretty normal day—for these days—at the Ontario Legislature."

Mr Premier, how do you like your new Ontario so far? Envision this: an Ontario with no new foreign investors, an Ontario with thousands of people laid off because their jobs are about to be privatized, and an Ontario that is about to lay off about 27,000 workers in order to give some wealthy people a tax cut. That's where you're taking this province

Yesterday I witnessed two picketers who were taken to hospital after being beaten by the batons of riot police who came out of nowhere from behind the strikers and just started bashing everyone. They didn't even see it coming. It was totally unprovoked.

Is this the Ontario you want to promote to potential investors? Because I'll tell you, Mr Premier, if I were a potential investor in Ontario and witnessed the rioting that occurred yesterday because of your government's draconian policies, I would certainly take my business elsewhere. Does anyone think the oppressive bully tactics that were witnessed yesterday are going to attract investors?

Your Common Sense Revolution is working, only it's the workers who have the common sense and are leading the revolution. Wake up, Mr Premier, and smell the napalm.

DEIDRE SCHOLTZ

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): I rise in the House today on a matter of urgency to ask all members for their assistance. The life of a young and vibrant child in my riding hangs in the balance. Five-year-old Deidre Scholtz has been stricken with a rare, life-threatening disease known as idiopathic aplastic anaemia. This disease prevents Deidre's bone marrow from manufacturing blood. The condition seriously weakens her immune system and her ability to fight common infections like the cold or flu virus, which is uncomfortable to many of us but deadly for her.

Bone marrow transplant testing is an expensive procedure. In the true nature of community spirit and volunteerism, the town of Milton has pulled together in an outpouring of support, with over 2,000 bone marrow samples contributed in one afternoon, and has raised over \$48,000 in funds to pay for tests.

The odds for Deidre are one in 20,000 to find a suitable match, but we can't do it alone. Halton Regional Police have set up an information phone line and the Royal Bank in Milton Mall is accepting donations.

I encourage all members of this House to consider a monetary donation or a blood sample donation to bolster the current supply of bone marrow registries. There are approximately 200 to 300 cases of this disease diagnosed yearly in Canada. In giving, not only might a donor be

found for Deidre, but for all those who suffer from this terrible affliction elsewhere. Please be generous.

CROWN LAND CAMPING FEES

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I wish to bring an issue to the attention of the Minister of Northern Development and Mines and the Minister of Natural Resources. Despite the fact that both ministries are led by one member, they appear to be working at cross-purposes to the detriment of economic development in the north.

As I understand it, the Ministry of Natural Resources is planning to implement a regulation that would permit ministry officials to charge a crown land camping fee of \$10 per night per person on American boats dropping anchor in Lake Superior this summer.

This is a fee that would only be applied to American boaters who choose to cruise waters that fall under crown land designation. Interestingly enough, this means that only northern Ontario bordered waters will be forced to levy this fee. This government might speak of Ontario being open for business, but in northern Ontario we're apparently closed to American tourists.

Previous governments, through the Ministry of Northern Development, have invested hundreds of thousands of dollars in developing marina infrastructure as a means to attract tourist dollars to the north. These projects have just begun to pay dividends, as numbers confirm a brisker flow of dollars from our southern neighbours.

This move by MNR is an assault on northern marina marketing efforts and in direct contravention of the mandate of the Ministry of Northern Development to work with its partners to nurture economic development initiatives in northern Ontario.

I call upon the minister to rescind the decision to extend the crown land camping fee to boundary waters, to recognize his mistake and to instruct his officials to withdraw any ads promoting this wrongheaded and ill-thought-out measure.

1340

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE DISPUTE

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): I'd like to direct my statement today to the Premier, Mike Harris. Bring this strike to an end, Mr Premier. The government must start negotiating in good faith. The OPSEU workers want a fair deal, and it's about time that you gave them one.

More than 20,000 members of the civil service are about to be fired or laid off in the province, and you are not offering them a fair deal. Under Bill 7, your anti-labour legislation, successor rights were exempted. OPSEU members whose jobs are privatized, divested or contracted out want to take their contracts, union representation and seniority with them. These rights are to apply to every other private and public employer in Ontario; why not to our civil servants? This is a non-monetary issue. It will not cost a cent.

The union's proposal on pensions should be accommodated. You say it will cost \$30 million; \$30 million is a small percentage of the cost of the overall package and it would allow 400 workers to continue to collect pension credits until they are eligible for their unrestricted

pension. You are willing to spend \$28 billion—and I might point out of borrowed money—to give a tax cut to the people of Ontario. All it would take is \$30 million to prevent a number of people from going on to the welfare rolls. This doesn't make sense, Mr Premier. Your 30% tax cut may be good politics, but it's bad economics and it's headed in the wrong direction.

Bargain in good faith, Mr Premier. Bring this strike to an end and give the thousands of workers a fair deal. Let's get this province moving again in the right direction: in the direction of labour peace, economic prosperity and a feeling of wellbeing enjoyed by Ontarians.

SCARBOROUGH GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I am pleased to rise today as the member for Scarborough Centre in order to celebrate 1996 as the 40th anniversary of Scarborough General Hospital.

Scarborough General Hospital is Scarborough's first hospital. It's also the largest community hospital in Metro. We in Scarborough are very proud of the outstanding service and care that have been provided to the residents of Scarborough over the past 40 years.

It was in 1952 that the Sisters of Misericorde, led by Sister Roseline, purchased the land and received the okay of Scarborough council to develop the city's first hospital. It was on May 11, 1956, that Scarborough General Hospital was officially opened. Known as the "hospital with heart," Scarborough General has made medical history with a number of innovations, especially in the treatment of heart problems. As well, Scarborough General is home to several world-renowned doctors.

Did this House know that Scarborough General Hospital was home to the world's first post-polio leg reconstruction; Metro's first long-term-care facility; Toronto's first sports medicine clinic; Canada's first community hospital to use clot-busting drugs for heart attacks; the first community hospital to use a Holmium YAG laser to break up kidney stones; the first Canadian hospital to use myoglobin testing to diagnose heart attacks in the emergency room; and that just this year Scarborough General Hospital was home to the first soya bean oil breast implant?

To commemorate its 40th birthday, Scarborough General Hospital is hosting a year-long series of events and activities to provide a retrospective view of 40 years of health care in Scarborough, as well as a glimpse of health care into the next 40 years. I'd ask the members to join me today in wishing a happy 40th birthday—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member's time has expired.

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): It appears I owe some members of the Conservative caucus an apology. I owe them an apology because I assumed that all of them supported the Mike Harris crazy tax cut. It appears I was wrong.

According to that fine newspaper the Kitchener-Waterloo Record, MPP Chris Stockwell said that as many as one out of four Tory backbenchers thinks that the Harris tax cut is crazy. Fully one quarter of the Conserva-

tives elected on a promise to cut income tax by 30% now have second thoughts about a plan to basically increase the provincial debt by \$20 billion. Finally, Conservative backbenchers are waking up and realizing that this irresponsible tax cut, which is designed to benefit the wealthiest in society, just isn't worth it.

It isn't worth it for the \$1.5-billion cuts that have been made to health care. It isn't worth it when you take into account all the layoffs that are going to occur because of teachers, police officers, health care workers. Even Ralph Klein says this is a stupid, wacky tax cut. The Minister of Finance knows that it doesn't make sense to add \$20 billion to the provincial debt.

There is light at the end of the tunnel, hopefully.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE DISPUTE

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I stand in the House today in order to bring a message to Premier Harris and the rest of his cabinet and his backbenchers.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Where is the Premier?

Mr Bisson: The Premier is out today, but I want to none the less send this message: Many members of this assembly, at least on our side of the House, have been out over the last number of weeks talking to the people out on the picket lines, not only in our ridings but across Ontario, to try to really ascertain exactly what it is that the people out on strike are asking for and what it is that we can do as members of this assembly try to find a resolution to this conflict that would be beneficial to both the employees and the employer in this case.

What strikers are telling me across this province and what they're telling me in Cochrane South is simply this: They're saying that they want to be treated the same as any other employer would treat a private sector employee, because what you have here is a government that stands in its place and says, "We want to be able to run government as they do in the private sector," but the minute they get the chance, they treat their employees opposite to what they would in the private sector.

Employees in the private sector have successor rights. If an employer sells off his plant, the collective agreement goes with it. But because Mike Harris wants to revise Ontario to his new vision, public sector employees have a much different case when it comes to successor rights. When it comes to seniority rights, private sector employees have protection under the collective agreements. Mike Harris is stripping that out of their collective agreements.

I say to the government, on behalf of those people out on the picket line: Mike Harris, treat public sector employees the same as private sector employees are treated.

CURLING CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr Trevor Pettit (Hamilton Mountain): I would like to take this opportunity in the House today to inform you that the city of Hamilton will be hosting the 1996 Ford World Men's and Women's Curling Championships from Saturday, March 23 to Sunday, March 31. The Ford Worlds, as they are called, will take place at the fabulous Cops Coliseum in downtown Hamilton.

We are very proud that Hamilton is the site of this exciting sports event. Our city is expecting 230,000 visitors from all around the world during the week of the competition. Participating in this event will be teams from seven European countries, one team from the Pacific region, as well as teams from the USA and from Canada. It is truly an international event which highlights the increasing popularity of curling around the world.

The Ford Worlds will also be instrumental in determining the entrants to the Olympic curling competitions at the 1998 games in Nagano, Japan. The current men's Canadian championship team is led by Manitoba's Jeff Stoughton and the women's Canadian championship team is led by Ontario's own Marilyn Bodogh.

I invite everyone to come over to Hamilton next week to show their support for this great international sport and for the Canadian teams as they make their way to the next winter Olympics. I'm sure everyone knows how to get to downtown Hamilton.

I also encourage all visitors to catch the incomparable view from high atop Hamilton Mountain and to enjoy the unparalleled hospitality of Hamilton Mountain citizens.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to the following bill in his office on Tuesday, January 30, 1996.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees (Ms Deborah Deller): The following is the title of the bill to which His Honour has assented:

Bill 26, An Act to achieve Fiscal Savings and to promote Economic Prosperity through Public Sector Restructuring, Streamlining and Efficiency and to implement other aspects of the Government's Economic Agenda / Projet de loi 26, Loi visant à réaliser des économies budgétaires et à favoriser la prospérité économique par la restructuration, la rationalisation et l'efficacité du secteur public et visant à mettre en oeuvre d'autres aspects du programme économique du gouvernement.

ESTIMATES

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I have a message from the Administrator of the government signed by his own hand.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The Administrator of the government transmits estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending March 31, 1996, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly.

That's signed in Toronto, March 19, 1996, by His Honour Roy McMurtry.

1350

SECURITY OF LEGISLATIVE PRECINCT SÉCURITÉ DE L'ENCEINTE PARLEMENTAIRE

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of order concerning yesterday's confrontation outside the Legislative Assembly. I have

extreme concerns about the extreme force that was used by the Ontario Provincial Police on behalf of the assembly. I guess I'm referring to subsections 103(1), (2) and (3) of the Legislative Assembly Act that make it very clear that you, Mr Speaker, have responsibility for security of the assembly. Therefore, Mr Speaker, it is my view that you have responsibility to deal with the consequences of yesterday's chaos and damage and individual injury that have occurred as a result of that level of force. As I said, my concern is with regard to the excessive force that was used by the Ontario Provincial Police.

I want to just very briefly outline some of the very specific items that have come to our attention. I can tell you that staff of the assembly who work in the Whitney Block can tell you that yesterday, while the OPP riot police were waiting to exercise their responsibilities, they were running up and down the hallways of the Whitney Block, I guess psyching themselves up, banging their shields up and down the hallways constantly. They weren't carrying out any orders at that time; they were simply, I guess—and I do not understand it—they were, I'd say, psyching themselves up. But what they did is they intimidated staff of the Legislative Assembly and I am sure intimidated staff of caucuses that reside over there, as well as, I'm sure, caucus members.

Mr Speaker, you will know that yesterday at least five people were injured. Again the Ontario Legislature made the national news, that there was violence again at the Ontario Legislature, a near-riot again at the Ontario Legislature, a near-riot again in Toronto. I don't know what this does for the image of Ontario or the image of the Ontario Legislature. I do know what this does to attract investment and jobs into this province, and it's very, very negative indeed.

According to the newspapers, a high-ranking Metro police officer said, "They were like animals," describing the Ontario Provincial Police. As described again in the press, and I quote from the press, "After the incident, one of the OPP team leaders blew kisses to the crowd of angry pickets as the team returned inside the building." That's a direct quote, but also has been reported to us, and it was viewed on the clips on TV. That is clearly inciting a riot and inciting a reaction from people who are already under extreme pressure because of the situation in this province.

We need to know in this assembly: Who called for this level of force; who monitored the actions of the Ontario Provincial Police when that force was being carried out?

I don't advocate blocking the entrance of the Legislature by OPSEU—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order.

Mr Cooke: You can see some of the problem when someone says that we shouldn't be allowed to picket, and somehow that is seen as blocking entrance to the assembly. There happens to be a Constitution in this province, and the Constitution guarantees the ability to assemble.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr Cooke: If I might continue, Mr Speaker, as I said—and I've said this on behalf of our caucus before—we do not advocate the blocking of the entrances to the

Ontario Legislature, not by OPSEU, not by security guards—

Applause.

Mr Cooke: I wish you'd shown the same level of enthusiasm when security was blocking entrances to the assembly last October. But I don't advocate it, I don't support it, no matter who's involved in it, and it will be raised every time by this caucus. But while there was a near riot taking place, you had lawyers at that time going to court seeking an injunction to solve the problem in a legal way through the courts and with the existing law in this province.

Mr Speaker, I think one option you could have considered would have been to announce that the Legislature would be recessed at 1:30—that could have been arranged with the three House leaders—and that it was in recess until the court had dealt with the issue of an injunction. That would have dispensed with all of the problems of security and all of the resulting physical damage to individuals and the image to this Legislature and to this community. The law and the courts are there to deal with situations like this in a fair way but in a safe way to all of the people of the province. Instead, this level of force, under someone's instructions to use that level of force, resulted in people being injured and resulted in severe damage to the image of Ontario, the Ontario Legislature and Toronto.

Mr Speaker, enough is enough. This is not the first incident where extreme force has been used around here. Members of the assembly have expressed grave concern to you before. We asked for a full public investigation after the October incident during the throne speech. That never happened; there never was a public investigation of what happened in October.

Mr Speaker, I want to propose something to you. If you have something else that would provide a public process, then I'd like to hear it. But specifically, Mr Speaker, I propose that we should together be requesting from the government a public inquiry into what happened around this place yesterday. Only through an independent public inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act can we get to the bottom of what happened yesterday. The public could testify and the process would of course be open to the public. There has to be accountability: accountability for the police, accountability for everyone who made decisions yesterday. No police officer should be allowed to taunt and provoke demonstrators, not around the Parliament of this province. This will incite violence. It did incite violence.

Mr Speaker, I'm asking you to state your position. You're the person who has to show some leadership on this issue today. This cannot be allowed to happen again. My strong view on behalf of my caucus is it can only be resolved through a public inquiry concerning yesterday's devastating events around this place.

Mrs Janet Ecker (Durham West): Mr Speaker, I rise on a point of privilege because I believe there is another view here which needs to be heard on the issue that was raised by the honourable member.

For three weeks, staff and MPPs and members of the public respected the OPSEU lines. We waited when we were asked. We met and listened to them give us their

views and their messages when we were asked. But yesterday, members of the public, members of the media, MPPs, and members of our staffs who were not members of the union were physically, forcibly prohibited from entering their workplace when they wanted to. I myself spent over two hours attempting to get into the building by the rules that OPSEU had set. The police attempted on two occasions to negotiate access for members of the public, for staff, for the MPPs. They were forcibly denied. They said that if we were not allowed access, trouble could occur. They did not want this to happen.

1400

OPSEU was a legal strike. There was a legal picket line until yesterday, and we respect that. But, Mr Speaker, we're paid by the voters. I'm paid by the voters of Durham West to do a job, to represent their interests here. Yesterday I was forcibly prevented from doing that. The only option that I had to get into the building was to use the assistance of the police.

If there are concerns that have been raised about the conduct of the police, our caucus has written to you, as you know. We have asked you to take an investigation. As the security issues fall solely within the purview of your office, our caucus would request that you review and report at the earliest possible opportunity on the following security-related issues: the role of your office in planning for the advance picket lines and the protest which occurred yesterday, the role and responsibility and jurisdiction of the Metropolitan Toronto Police Force, the responsibility of the Ontario Provincial Police and the role and responsibility and jurisdiction of the protective service.

We were concerned about the safety and security of the people who work in this building. Public servants and visitors to the assembly were forcibly denied entrance. We want to know what steps your office will take to prevent any recurrences of this unfortunate and very sad day. Thank you very much, sir.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Is this on the same point?

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: It is disgusting, and let me right now talk to you a little bit in my point of privilege about the balance and fairness and the justice that I don't see happening in this House with regard to identifying and recognizing members. There is a rule that the official opposition can stand up on a point of privilege or order and be recognized first. This was not the case today.

But let me continue on, because I want to attack this from a very, very different angle. I want to refer to subsection 21(a) of the standing orders, with regard to precedent.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr Bartolucci: Let them yell and scream and let them accuse us of trying to be disruptive. Let them go. It doesn't bother me. It shouldn't bother you. But the one thing it does do, Mr Speaker, it bothers the people of Ontario so let me tell you with regard to my point of privilege about the precedent that was set.

My concerns, and they are major concerns with very, very serious ramifications, are with regard to the conduct

of the riot police yesterday within the walls and the halls of the Whitney Block, not outside. Let's talk a little bit about within the walls and the halls of the Whitney Block.

My staff was at work when out of nowhere, and obviously out of control, two supervisory officers, I guess in charge of the riot squad, burst into my office and upset my legislative assistant to a great degree. She asked, "What's going on?" I came out of my office and said, "Is there a problem here?" At that point in time, they viewed outside and then they walked out. No explanation, no permission, no order at all; burst in, viewed, walked out. As far as I am concerned, that disrupted the business of my office and according to subsection 21(a) that is wrong and I ask you to investigate it.

Let them talk. It doesn't bother me. The people of Ontario don't hear them anyway. They're tired of listening to them, so let them talk.

On my way down the hall to the House leader to try to ask for some guidance, when we asked for a little bit of guidance here, I was met by a troop of riot police—

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Etobicoke West is out of order.

Mr Bartolucci: —clearly out of control, running down the hall. I had to jump away in order to avoid being trampled. Again, precedent; subsection 21(a), interfering with my right to do business.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Mr Bartolucci: Mr Speaker, I ask you to find the answers to a few very simple questions. First, who authorized the invasion of my office? I would like to know who authorized the invasion into my office. Second, who authorized the charge down the hall when there was clearly no one at risk in the halls of the Whitney Block? Third, I'd like you to try to find out the answer to why the caucus assistant to the Premier, a Mr King, who was trying to be a movie star with his dynamic pretending of being pushed aside, was almost leading the charge. I ask that you investigate and, in fairness to everyone, I ask also for a public inquiry so that we can get to the bottom of this in a realistic, honest way.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): We've come to a pretty piece here in Ontario. As a member of this Legislature, of this Legislative Assembly, for over 20 years, we've seen more disruptions and confrontation outside of this place in the last number of months than we have in almost 20 years previous to June 1995.

I want to say I am very concerned about some of the comments that are being made by some of the people across the way, not by all. The view seems to be that those of us who are requesting that you consider and agree to a public inquiry into the decisions that led to the police action yesterday somehow are condoning violence or violence on a picket line. That is hardly the case.

We are being very clear here. This place, as we all know, is a public place to which members should have access. The people who were picketing yesterday were also engaged in legal picketing activity related to a legal strike. The question is whether the approach taken by you to go through the courts to deal with the problem was the

appropriate one, which we believe it was. If that was the appropriate one, why then did this occur?

I'm not just quoting from the press or referring to what I saw on television last night, and I watched it on two different stations, one after the other. The fact is that I saw police lined up in the corridors hitting their batons on their shields and then running in order, initially in order, down the hall and out the door and then forming what looked like an attempt to form a V-shaped wedge and going into the crowd and then appearing to lose complete control and to just batter people.

It's interesting that in the press this morning it states that a staff inspector, the second in command of the Metro police 52 division, was lashed across her right wrist as she blocked an OPP nightstick that was aimed at a striker. I want to make clear I'm very serious about this. Another individual, a striker, who happens to be a probation officer and a parole officer employed by this government, was knocked unconscious with a gash on his head after being struck by a nightstick and had to be taken to the hospital.

Is that an appropriate response to the fact that people were having difficulty entering the building? Is it an appropriate response? It has been suggested by some across the way that because verbal insults and pushing occurred, and in some cases I understand someone said they were spat upon, that meant we should take a decision to unleash this squad of OPP officers, without warning apparently, against a legal picket line and to hit people.

This is the assembly that belongs to the people of the province. The reason we're saying, all of us, that we should have access is because it belongs to the people of the province. Is it necessary, is it appropriate, that we should have to witness this kind of police action, in essence, in protecting members here from members of the public who are engaged in legal activity? Why could we not have taken a more serious approach, a balanced approach, to await the outcome of the decision of the court?

1410

We need to know who made the decisions. We need to know who decided that the OPP should be called in. We need to know what the relationship was between the OPP and the Metropolitan Toronto Police in giving advice to those who made the decisions. Then we need to know how those decisions were carried out and were orders carried out properly. Central to this is who made the decisions and why. Did the police then lose control of the situation to the extent it appeared from television last night?

It's important that such an inquiry be public, that it should not simply be the police investigating themselves and making a report. It's important that all those involved—members, staff, strikers, members of the public and police—should be able to explain what they saw and what happened, in a public way. In our view, the only way that can occur is if it is a full, public inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act.

I would hope that you would agree with our request for that and advise the members of the assembly that you would support it. In our view, that's the only way this can be properly aired, that the whole situation can be

calmed and we can ensure that security around this place is handled in future in a way that does not lead to what appeared to be a situation where the police got out of control.

Mr Robert Chiarelli (Ottawa West): Mr Speaker, I'm rising on a question of privilege. It has to do with my access to this building as an elected member of the Legislature, and I'm sure it applies to everybody in this House.

As you're aware, Mr Speaker, there is a memorandum of understanding, which has been signed and has been effective since January 1993 dealing with security in this place. It's an agreement between the Ministry of the Solicitor General and the Speaker on behalf of the assembly, on behalf of me as a member and other members in here. I'm saying to you, Mr Speaker, that my privileges have been breached in that I was not given secure access to this place in a reasonable manner, in a manner which should have been provided.

I want to refer to several sections of this memorandum of agreement, and I think it's right on point and it refers to some of the questions which have been raised by the member for Algoma with which I concur.

The agreement states under section 8.3.1, "Where the assembly determines or the ministry"—that's the Ministry of the Solicitor General—"recommends that a special event or situation within the legislative precinct requires a level of security greater than that normally provided under this memorandum of understanding, such an increased level of security shall be provided jointly by the OPP and the OGPS," which is the Ontario Government Protective Service. It goes on and it has a subsection, and this is the relevant part, "In any case referred to in section 8.3.1, a security plan shall be prepared by the ministry"—that's of the Solicitor General—"and provided to the assembly prior to the event or situation."

Now, Mr Speaker, clearly, with the OPSEU strike on, the picketers having been out there, clearly, with everything in the media that we saw over the course of the weekend that there will be a problem here in terms of access and in terms of security, the Ministry of the Solicitor General ought to have been aware of it, you ought to have been aware of it, and in my opinion you and the Solicitor General ought to have abided by the rule of law, the provisions of this memorandum of agreement.

I am asking you, Mr Speaker, to conduct a public inquiry and to provide the answers to several questions.

In the opinion of the assembly or the Speaker, was there a level of security greater than that normally provided? Was it that type of situation? In my opinion, clearly it was. Was there a security plan provided as required by the memorandum of understanding? If there was not a security plan provided, why not? If there was a security plan provided, why was it not provided to the assembly? And I ask you to define what "providing it to the assembly" means. Does that mean secretly to the Speaker? Does it mean providing that plan to the assembly is providing it to you and you will discuss it with the House leaders?

We need answers to these questions not only in response to what happened yesterday, but to future situa-

tions. So I'm saying to you, and I'm raising a point of privilege, that my privileges have been breached, because I saw no plan. I have not been advised by my House leader or any House leader that the assembly has been provided with a security plan as required by agreement.

With all due respect, I'm asking you to provide the answers to these questions through a public inquiry.

Mr Chris Stockwell (Etobicoke West): First and foremost, I would like to say, very personally—and I suppose you can say it universally—that no one in this Legislature would condone wanton acts of violence. That would be a given. And I don't think anyone would speak—

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): You can check with Mike Harris.

Mr Stockwell: I think that's truly an unfair comment, to the member from Cochrane.

I will further state that from considering the situation of yesterday, there is a fundamental disagreement between OPSEU and this government. Without debate, that is out there in the public forum.

There are going to be differences of opinion and disagreements that take place. The leader of the New Democratic Party has suggested he has not seen in the last number of years as many public demonstrations as he's seen in the past couple of months. I would agree with the member for Algoma. He's absolutely right. We, as the government of the day, duly elected, are carrying forward on a platform of policies that, by and large, some sectors of this province are vehemently opposed to.

I am here to say—and I rise on this point of privilege—that I allow for those kinds of disagreements. I allow that people will want to congregate out front of this place and demonstrate against this government. That is the freedom of a democratic process. I understand that this group, OPSEU, has withdrawn their services and we are in a strike. I accept that. I accept further that they are going to picket the entrances to this building and stop those members and their staff coming in and give them their 15 or 20 minutes or half-hour, whatever it takes, to convince them that crossing that picket line is wrong. I accept that too. I accept all those particulars.

I accept the fact that sometimes the police are put in a very, very awkward situation, because they're damned if they do and they're damned if they don't in a lot of respects. I think most reasonable people would at least consider the difficult nature that the police found themselves in yesterday. But when you review this situation—

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): We said that.

Mr Stockwell: I say to the member for Beaches-Woodbine, when you review this situation and report back to this House, you must remember one important fact: This is a democracy, this is a democratically elected government, and this is the cradle of democracy in this province.

I myself tried, and the staff that I work with, for three hours to peaceably cross that line, not pushing nor arguing. And we—not just myself—were intimidated, we were shoved, we had whistles blown in our ears, and no access was given. At one point during that time, the chant went up: "No one in. No one out." It seems to me that the game plan yesterday was to shut democracy down. I will not be party to that.

Mr Speaker, when you review this tape, when you review the action, I understand there's some concern with the police, but understand, anyone who counsels people to shut democracy down is counselling, in my opinion, anarchy. I will not be party to anarchy. This is a democracy. I was elected; I will serve.

1420

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I find it interesting and amazing that members across the floor will speak of anarchy and will speak of democracy. It is hypocrisy at its best. Let me tell you, no one disagrees with the fundamental principle that legislators of all political parties should have free access and should be able to get safely into this building. No one on any side of the House would disagree with that.

The point we are making on this side—and I saw the riot squad, the Star Wars team run through the Whitney Block, run by my office—is the level of force that was used. Members across—the gentleman in the back is waving away as to why he thinks it's funny to see people have their heads bashed in. I don't agree with that. Maybe that's the Tory way in Ontario. There's a difference between allowing free and safe access, there's a difference between the police helping members who may have a tough time on the government side of the House getting into this building, and the riot squad being called in to bash heads and bust knees in order to clear the gauntlet for the Tory ministers to hop over that fence and run into the building.

That was the message we saw on television last night. That is the message that you want to send out across Ontario, across this country and across this continent, that in Ontario we send riot squads to bash heads and break knees to allow legislators to get in, because that is the only way it can be done. I don't agree with that.

I think the question, Mr Speaker, that you have to look at and that is important to the way we operate here is, fundamentally, who gave the orders? Was it a police decision? Was it an OPP local decision? Was there consultation with the Metro police department, which appeared to be shunned and pushed aside yesterday? The Metro police officers, who patrol and work in this region and do a great job, were shunted aside yesterday. They were taken over by the OPP. Who gave those orders? Most importantly, the question is, was there political involvement in the orders they were given? That is fundamental to be asked.

People across this province must be assured that what happened yesterday, the mistake that happened outside yesterday was not as a result of political orders being given on the government side of the House, because that is dangerous, that is not how we operate. The principle of police being independent and free of government is essential regardless of where you stand on this. That has to be answered and it can only be answered through doing it openly, publicly and ensuring that all of the key players who were involved in yesterday's decisions are being brought forward to answer the questions that are necessary.

God help us if there was political involvement in yesterday's decision, because that really then becomes anarchy, that really becomes the opposite of everything

we stand for. The scenes we saw yesterday were scenes that we saw in past years in South Africa, not scenes that should be repeated in the front of this Legislature again. Mr Speaker, I ask you to come forward and assure this House that there was no political direction given yesterday to send the riot squad after those protesters outside.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): There are certain images that are etched in our collective memories: the imagery that was transmitted from Selma, Alabama, in the 1950s and the early 1960s; but a decade later the imagery from Richard Daley's Chicago; the imagery from Pinochet's Chile.

When I presented to this House yesterday on a point of privilege what had been relayed to me by witnesses to this assault on lawfully assembled people, I tell you, Speaker, I had no idea that it was as violent and disturbing, and as thorough and aggressive and excessive a violation of the rights of Ontarians and Canadians to collectively assemble, that it was as strong an abuse of police power and that it was as bloody an assault on people who had gathered to express a viewpoint and gathered in a way that was peaceful, democratic and indeed traditionally acceptable in our society.

But, you see, this image now, this image of Toronto, Ontario, has been broadcast across Canada, across North America and I'm confident internationally. I tell you, Speaker, it joins the imagery that I spoke of, along with others.

What's bothersome is that there was anticipation of a large number of people outside the Legislature. I read, Speaker, your comments in the weekend press, in which you indicated an anticipation of a large number of people being gathered outside this assembly. I read the comments of the Sergeant at Arms, in which he, not inappropriately, acknowledged his anticipation of a large number of people. Clearly, the fact that government lawyers were in court here in Toronto at the beginning of the day on Monday seeking an injunction again indicates that the government was well aware that there was going to be a large gathering of OPSEU women and men, of supporters from other unions and of the general public who supported the interests and the rights of OPSEU members to establish picket lines.

Much has been said, and I'm not sure how thoughtfully, about democracy. But the fact is that in democracy the rule of law must prevail, and the fact is that the process to be utilized in dealing with issues that have been complained of, like difficult access, is that you go to court, as the government did, seek, and if you're successful with your argument, obtain an injunction.

The OPP riot squad surely knew or ought to have known and the people giving directions to that squad knew or ought to have known that at the very moment that they were bludgeoning, literally violently attacking, bloodying, Ontarians lawfully engaged in their right to picket, they knew or ought to have known that at the very same time, government lawyers were in the course of obtaining an injunction in Toronto courts.

Frankly, Speaker, the message that this sends out—and again, as I say, when I relayed this information first yesterday afternoon I literally had no idea of the seriousness of it, as was portrayed in the press coverage and in

the videotaping that was broadcast on news, as I say, not just in Ontario, but—you know it, Speaker—internationally last night. We witnessed, and the people of this province witnessed, surely what goes beyond merely heavy-handed. We witnessed a violent abuse of police force.

And the purpose—reflect on this, please, Speaker. It's clear, and when one reads the press report, the author in the Toronto Star indicates that the gathering of people, the gathering of strikers, was angry but not violent. There's no suggestion that there was any violence being exercised.

Further, and this has been referred to, after the completion of the assault by the police on these women and men—and don't forget, Speaker, and I don't know if you witnessed the people gathered outside, but there were children there too; there were seniors there too. And the police waded into, barged into, in a cavalry approach style, this group of people, swinging away with their batons and going far beyond intimidating, going far beyond crowd control, but engaging in what I tell you, Speaker, constituted violent assaults on members of the public.

You know, Speaker, that the police have certain powers of arrest. I'm not aware of them exercising any of their powers of arrest yesterday, such that a person who's arrested could avail himself or herself of the due process that our law avails them of, or provides to them. You also know that the Criminal Code provides for certain powers under certain circumstances to disperse crowds of people. Similarly, I'm not aware and I believe sincerely that there was no exercise of any of those powers under the Criminal Code to disperse crowds of people. As well, Speaker, you know that police have powers of arrest that do not entail the laying of charges, and that's purportedly to protect public peace or to maintain public order.

1430

Once again, there's no suggestion that any of the police involved in this attack on Ontario's citizens utilized that power given them by the code; rather, they engaged in a violent exercise, none of which is sanctioned by either the Criminal Code, certainly is not only not sanctioned but it's contrary, I tell you, Speaker, to some very fundamental rights that are enshrined in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms. It was the most violent attack that one could witness. I tell you, Speaker, it has marked Ontario now for all time. I would like to make comparisons historically, but even Mitch Hepburn's Ontario, the anti-worker Ontario of Mitch Hepburn, failed to raise levels of violence that were as unconscionable as what we witnessed yesterday.

I've listened carefully, as all of us have, to the member for Durham West. She tries to paint a somewhat contrary picture of this. In my view, the fact that the member for Durham West would appear to want to justify, along with some of her colleagues, the conduct of the police yesterday—I haven't heard any condemnation of the conduct of the police, none of us have, other than from the opposition members. That cries out, I tell you, Speaker, clearly for the need for there to be a full, independent and public inquiry.

In view of the fact that the events of yesterday are not solitary, that there appears to have been an escalation in

the level of violence being employed by armed and uniformed personnel against people attending at or near Queen's Park and the Parliament Building, witness back to the very opening of this Parliament, in view of the fact that there's an escalation of violence with its pinnacle being reached yesterday, I tell you, Speaker, there is no time for delaying a demand, a call, for the inception of an independent and very public inquiry.

Speaker, I exhort you to join in this call for an inquiry into what happened yesterday. I exhort you to insist that that inquiry take place promptly. I tell you, Speaker, I've received phone calls, as has every other member of this Legislature, I'm sure, from persons who were literal witnesses to these violent attacks, these crimes by the police. This is Ontario and we're speaking in the Legislature about crimes by the police. This is so contrary to what all of us expected to be doing in 1996, to be addressing the matter of crimes by the police. Who do these members of the public, who do these people call upon? They've been attacked, they've been victimized by the police.

The purpose of the police exercise, I reiterate, was to facilitate the entry by Tory members through legal picket lines, access by Tory members past legal picket lines, when the Tory members already had a mechanism in place, the government already had a process in place, and that was the suit for an injunction in our courts.

An inquiry must be held promptly, it must be thorough, it must be public. I tell you, Speaker, people are increasingly frightened about attending at Queen's Park for fear of this sort of violence. That cannot be allowed to happen. We can't be allowed to put up barricades of fear. The people of Ontario must remain confident that they can attend at Queen's Park without fear of being beaten up, battered to the ground, bloodied up, assaulted, sent to the hospital by the government's police forces. I tell you that, Speaker.

The Speaker: Does somebody have something further to add, some new information on Mr Cooke's point of privilege?

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): Indeed, I would like to bring to the House and to yourself, Mr Speaker, a different point of view with respect to the happenings of yesterday around Queen's Park here. Yes, I do share the concern, as most members do, with the events that have taken place. But it didn't really sink in until this morning when I started to get calls into my office with respect to what people had seen on the news, on the screen all yesterday until the evening hours.

Really, it didn't sink in until I got a call from a school principal who was just about to finalize a trip down to Queen's Park, to the place where it is so important to take these school children, to show the place where some important decisions, directions and leadership come into their homes. I don't have to tell you that I had to listen for about 15 minutes at how appalled that principal was. But most of the concern came not so much from him; it came from the parents who called the school and the school principal. Sadly, do you know what they wanted to know? Is it safe to take the kids on the excursion to Queen's Park. This goes very, very deep. It's very profound. It's very traumatic to the parents and the

school children. I wonder, Mr Speaker, if this is the image and the message that you as Speaker of this House and we as members of this House want to convey to the people and the kids in our province. I don't think so. I don't think any of us want to do that.

I go as far as agreeing with my colleague Chris Stockwell that we do not condone violence around this place. That's as far as I go with his comment, by the way. Mr Speaker, I also totally agree with previous speakers, especially the member for Windsor-Riverside and Mr Chiarelli, the member for Ottawa West, that I think you are responsible and I think direction has been given to conduct a full inquiry into the matter.

When our people, and especially young people, are so much concerned if it's safe to come down to Queen's Park, then we have a severe problem. Let me say this without offending the other side: The situation yesterday was not brought about or on by the strikers but by whoever gave directions to call in the squad. We could have accused the strikers if indeed the government had provided itself with the injunction or a court order, whatever, as it said it was going to do. Why didn't they do it?

I'm sorry; if you're pointing the finger at the Speaker, I think the Speaker will have an opportunity to come back to this House and address the House on this very particular issue. So I thank you for your finger, honourable member.

I think the government perhaps would have been somewhat excused if it had provided this House and the people out there and the strikers with that particular piece of paper, if you will, that injunction or court order, and then gone outside and met the strikers and said, "Look, we have a legal piece of paper to enter the House peacefully." If there was a time where common sense should have prevailed and been used, it was an occasion like yesterday. I have to say, very sadly, that the government, or whoever gave direction, if it was you, Mr Speaker—and I apologize for addressing you on this particular issue if it was indeed you, Mr Speaker—then I think we are in a very, very sad situation because if the strikers had been presented with the opportunity that, "Either you let us in with an injunction here, a court order, or we have to find other means," then I think the government or yourself, Mr Speaker, could have been excused. So why didn't you or why didn't they or why didn't the leader do that? Why did they have to bring the squad team, the republican army, if you will, and barge their way into this House?

I totally agreed with the member for Windsor-Riverside when he said, "Couldn't we have adjourned the House for an hour or so until a court order would have been provided and then met the strikers and said, 'We have a legal right to enter the House'?" I think the situation was totally mishandled, totally lacked direction, totally lacked leadership and was certainly a total lack of common sense.

I don't want to indulge in the issues, because I think it is a very serious issue. It is neither funny, nor does it set a precedent which I as a member of this House and you as the Speaker or any member of this House should be proud of.

I join the other members to call on you and make sure that actions are in place so that actions like this will not be repeated at the people's place.

1440

M. Gilles Pouliot (Lac-Nipigon) : J'aimerais attirer votre attention sur le livre de règlements, page 15, «Les privilèges», et je cite :

«Les privilèges sont les droits dont jouissent les membres de l'Assemblée législative, collectivement et individuellement, en vertu de la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative et d'autres lois, ou en vertu de la pratique, des précédents et des usages.»

Chers collègues, hier, comme membre de l'Assemblée, j'ai vu de mes yeux, d'une part, un conflit de travail où les frères et ses soeurs les syndiqués exerçaient leur droit démocratique ici, comme mon collègue a mentionné plutôt, dans le bastion de la démocratie, ou la voix de la démocratie, si vous voulez, des gens qui avaient démocratiquement exercé leur droit de retirer leur labeur. Tout est légal jusqu'à maintenant.

J'ai vu hier sur le terrain de l'Assemblée législative ces mêmes gens dans certains cas — non universellement, il faut le dire — étant victimes de façon délibérée, certains diront de façon systématique, d'un excès de force. Certains, certaines, dieu merci et dieu en est témoin, en petits nombres jusqu'à maintenant, sont tombés sous les coups d'une force organisée.

Jamais je n'aurais cru qu'ici en Ontario dans notre beau pays, comme on le prononce, comme on le dit, le cite en latin, l'équilibre, cette balance au nom d'une soi-disant démocratie, l'honneur, le respect dont nous jouissons tous, aurait été ternie, non que le record était tout à fait immaculé. Mais ce genre d'incident prend des proportions extraordinaires et amène des questions quand on examine le passé récent depuis que l'Assemblée est revenue il y a quelque mois, jusqu'à hier, aujourd'hui et demain. Je demande, le coupable, c'est qui ? Qui a donné l'ordre ? Qui nous a mis dans ce pétrin ? Mais qu'est-ce qui se passe ? Les gens de mon comté, comme nous tous, les gens qui paient mon salaire et un peu du vôtre ont accès à l'écran de télévision. Ce sont des gens paisibles. Ces gens parlent peu. Ces gens paient continuellement, mais espèrent que l'avenir sera un peu meilleur, donc ils sont confrontés chez nous, et chez vous aussi, avec l'image d'une violence sans précédent.

Je me joins à mes collègues en conclusion parce que moi aussi j'ai peur. Vous savez ce qui me fait peur ? Je vais le partager avec vous ; vous êtes un homme instruit, vous êtes une personne intelligente. On va se parler au nom des autres. On va faire ça ensemble. J'ai peur que le respect et l'honneur, au nom de la démocratie qui était mentionnée par mon collègue M. Stockwell, en prennent de façon mauvaise un coup. Ce n'est pas juste. Mais je ne veux pas venir ici, travailler au nom de mes concitoyens, étant chargé d'un fardeau extraordinaire. Promettez-nous à travers une enquête pour que tous sachent que ce sont eux qui nous protègent ici à l'Assemblée. Il s'agit de rétablir la confiance à travers l'équilibre. Je ne demande pas plus, mais pas moins que cela non plus.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines) : I'll try to be brief and to the point on this. As a member who has been in the Legislature since 1977, I cannot recall a time where there has been more tension and more confronta-

tion taking place than I have seen in the last few months, since the summer of the past year. I don't think it's an image which is very good for our province. One of the things we've been proud of—and all parties have been part of this, whether it's the Conservative Party, which ruled this province for 42 years, an unprecedented period of time in a democracy, I think, and then the Liberal Party and then the NDP, and now the Conservative Party again.

What we saw was an image of our province which was rather favourable, an image of moderation, an image of conciliation, an image of being able to get along well together, one of which we could all be justifiably proud and for which we could pay tribute to one another and people throughout history.

That image has changed considerably. I recognize that part of it is because there are honest but profound differences of opinion on the direction the province should go. I personally do not agree that the present administration is moving in the right direction, in terms of how fast it's moving, how drastically it's moving and how it's moving without, in my view, taking into consideration the ramifications of its actions. Be that as it may, that's not really the point we look at today. It's the point of confrontation in this province, and it's exemplified by what has been happening around this building for the past several months.

I know there's an inclination on the part of a government—perhaps there would be some on the government benches and perhaps some who advise the government who believe it's very good to project an image of strength and to have a Premier who is seen as a “tough guy” who will look at the special-interest groups and keep them in line and will stand fast for what he says he believes in. It's very tempting for those who are advising premiers to project that kind of image, because it can be very effective politically to do that.

I don't think, however, that helps the atmosphere in the province in the long run. I expect the government's going to stick to its guns in certain circumstances. I fully expect that. But to go out of its way, in my personal opinion—there may be others who disagree—to pick a fight with people, to confront people, is not healthy for the democracy in which we live. I know there are some out there who may dislike intently those who are opposed to the government, who may feel it's time those people were put in their place, as some would say on the government side, but I don't think it's helpful to do that as well.

1450

I hope nobody over there is enjoying what's happening in Ontario. I don't think anybody is. I don't think any of us who turn on the television set are happy, particularly if you flick to American channels to see the image of Ontario being projected across the border. I don't think any of us want to see that. I hope we can find a way of avoiding that.

When I think of a government of people like Bob Welch and Tom Wells and Roy McMurtry, and when you had perhaps others who were advising along the line like Hugh Segal, these were people who were moderates. Yes, they were Conservatives, but they were moderate at the same time. They could find that consensus which was so important to this province.

I didn't think and I don't think—and this is a subjective evaluation, I understand that—that some of the comments of the Premier recently have been helpful. They may rally the troops and they may project a certain image, but I don't think they've been entirely helpful. I would hope that some of the caucus would advise that a more conciliatory approach would be helpful.

Mr Speaker, you and I perhaps saw through the television set or read through our newspapers of the huge rally in Hamilton, over 100,000 people. It was a relatively peaceful rally that took place in Hamilton. There weren't the violent confrontations. I know that some on the government benches may have misinterpreted that as somewhat of a non-event. "These people were being very peaceful, they weren't being confrontational, therefore we can ignore them." I think instead it would have been important to reach out to that group of people, a lot of them middle Ontario. There are always going to be some radicals, there are always going to be some extreme people within a group, but overwhelmingly it was pretty well middle Ontario that had assembled in Hamilton that day.

I think they have advised you, members of the Legislature, on what you can do. There's been a call for an inquiry, and I think that would be helpful, because I found the images that I saw on television made me feel very uneasy when I saw the club-swinging. I understand how difficult it is for security forces in these circumstances, but when I saw those images of the police banging their batons on their protective material, like an army charging around, I was very concerned to see that for our province.

I guess what I would recommend, outside of what has been recommended, is that the government, because the government has most of the levers at its hands, abandon the politics of confrontation and embark upon the politics of conciliation and consensus. I think if we're able to do this, we'll move Ontario, in terms of the deportment of people, in terms of our democracy, back in the direction in which we would all agree it should be moving.

The Speaker: I'd like to thank all members for their input on this very, very, very important issue. I will reserve and get back.

MEAT PROCESSING PLANTS

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): Mr Speaker, on another point of order: I want to speak about another very important issue that faces every resident in this province. I don't know whether Team Harris knows the hardship they are causing many in this province. I'm talking about the farmers and the owners of provincially inspected plants, some of whom are finding themselves in very deep financial problems. I know that livestock and poultry don't stop growing, as you well know, Mr Speaker.

On a call-in show I was a guest on at the weekend that was the top issue: the meat inspection and the problems it's causing the residents of Ontario. I know this government and the Tory members say they have a backup plan in place. They don't have a backup plan in place. They didn't consult with people before this happened, and it's not working. I just want to know what they're doing about it.

SPEAKER'S RULING

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): Mr Speaker, I know after listening to the representations to you, you've indicated you're now going to reserve judgement. I must say, on behalf of my caucus anyway, how unsatisfactory that response is. You knew, you had to know, based on what happened around this place yesterday, that this matter was going to be raised in detail and that we were going to be looking to you for leadership on how this matter would be reviewed.

All we got today, after there was total agreement between the two opposition parties and some agreement even from the government party that there had to be something to review this, is: "I'll review it. Let's get on to question period." That is unacceptable based on what happened around this place yesterday. We cannot allow this place to continue without something more substantial. It is not acceptable. This is not business as usual. This is chaos.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The honourable member was well aware that yesterday I had indicated that I had asked for a full review on this. Today there has been a lot more input from all members who have spoken on a point of privilege, and I hope that you wouldn't expect me to make a decision today on all I've heard in this Legislature, so I am reserving my judgement.

Mr Cooke: Mr Speaker, at the very least I think we can expect that you will tell us—because last October when we raised matters of concern about the demonstration then, you said there was going to be an internal review, and we got nothing for months. You've got to tell us if there will be some public process or that you support some public process. This is unacceptable. It can't be swept under the carpet.

The Speaker: The member is well aware that there has been a committee looking into the very issues that were raised, and we would anticipate that tomorrow that committee will be making a report. The issue is closed.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): On a point of privilege, Mr Speaker: This institution has a place of honour in the province. People look to this institution. What people are seeing on television, not just in this province but internationally, is something that looks more like a police state. For you, Speaker, to say, "Well, I will consider it," and then put it off is frankly not giving this matter the gravity and the attention that it deserves. Speaker, all of us belong in this place and all of us are concerned—

The Speaker: Order. You cannot consider all the evidence and the speeches that I have heard today and ask me to make a decision on it now.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SECURITY OF LEGISLATIVE PRECINCT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): My first question is for the Solicitor General, who is responsible for the Ontario Provincial Police and is therefore

accountable to this Legislature for the behaviour of the OPP riot squad yesterday.

Mr Speaker, I suggest to you that it is not just legislators who were sickened by what happened yesterday. People who watched the television coverage, who saw the photos in the newspapers and who heard the radio reports were shocked and they were disturbed by what can only be described as excessive violence used by the riot squad officers. People were shocked to see images of riot squad police using billy clubs on the citizens of this province. You have to be dismayed that this is what Ontario has come to eight months after the start of the revolution.

There is no question and no disagreement that the people who were on the picket line had a legitimate right to be there and to protest. There is no question that we would all have expected tempers to be high. These people had been on strike for some three weeks. We don't argue that there was a need for assistance for Tory MPPs, who have been provocative over the course of the last three weeks, to cross that picket line.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Put your question, please.

Mrs McLeod: But nothing that happened on that picket line warranted the excessive force that we saw used yesterday. I want to ask you, Minister, were you aware that the OPP riot squad was going to be used yesterday? If you were, will you tell us when the riot squad was first brought in to the legislative precincts? Will you tell us what procedures the members of the riot squad were instructed to use in dealing with the strikers, and will you tell us whether in fact you did prepare a security plan and provide that to the assembly prior to the return of the Legislature yesterday, as you were required to do?

Hon Bob Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): The plan was prepared by the legislative security services and submitted and signed by the Sergeant at Arms. So the memo of understanding was followed.

1500

Mrs McLeod: Then I think the first step in a public inquiry into what happened yesterday is for the Solicitor General, who was responsible for preparing that plan and for making it available to the assembly, to table that plan so that we in fact do know what instructions were given to the riot squad police and who ordered them to go in yesterday, because what we saw yesterday was a bullying government that, quite frankly, got what every bully wants: a fight and a confrontation. There is no question that, whoever ultimately yesterday at that hour ordered the riot squad to go in, this government was expecting a fight, they were looking for a fight and indeed it is my understanding, Minister, that the riot squad was in this building the first day that the strike began.

I can tell you that aside from the shock of the images of violence we saw yesterday and the injuries that were suffered, the most disturbing aspect of yesterday's violence was what it says about the political climate that has been created by this government in this province, and it is a climate of bullying and confrontation that has been fuelled from the first day that this government took office. It's the kind of bullying and confrontation that we

saw from this government when it rammed Bill 26 through this Legislature and it is the kind of bullying and confrontation that we have seen from this government in dealing with this civil service strike from the time it used its legislative bullying powers to strip away rights until it ordered in the riot squads yesterday.

The Speaker: Would you put your question, please.

Mrs McLeod: Minister, I ask if you will acknowledge that the actions of the riot squad members were excessive. Did they exceed what you would have put into your plan for ensuring security that you tabled with the assembly? Will you tell us, given what happened yesterday, what steps you will take to ensure that this type of behaviour is never repeated.

The Speaker: The question has been asked.

Hon Mr Runciman: I can't comment on all of the complaints that have been levied by the leader with respect to the activities of the OPP. I do know that in my own personal circumstance the Minister of Transportation, the member for Oshawa and myself had to be escorted into Frost South and we had to literally run about 150 feet through a horde of people who were physically attacking the line of police trying to protect us to gain entry into the building. So in that particular instance, the one that I was very much involved in, I thought the police acted in a most responsible way.

With respect to the other allegations surrounding the conduct of the police, there are procedures and mechanisms in place for complaints to be filed. At the police complaints commission, there are already, I understand, two complaints that are possibly filed; at least they've been filed with the police service and may be formally filed with the police complaints commission, and perhaps others will follow. That's the procedure to be followed. This is the committee chaired by Justice Lapkin, an impartial body that will decide on the facts of the case.

Mrs McLeod: I suggest that it was not the protesters who called in the dogs yesterday, and it wasn't strikers who were holding attack drills of the riot squads in the hallways of the legislative precincts. I would suggest let's not get into a debate about provocation and where provocation arose, because for the last three weeks of this strike we have seen a government and government members who have almost relished the confrontation, a government that has taken pride in being able to put on a tough face and to tell the people of this province that they're standing up to anybody who opposes them and opposes their agenda. This is a government that takes pride in being able to talk about slashing jobs and closing down hospitals and laying off teachers. That is provocation. That is a government that is bent on creating a climate of confrontation that indeed was the basis for yesterday's violence. It is creating a climate of confrontation that sadly has turned the legislative grounds into a war zone.

Minister, it's not enough to respond to what happened yesterday by simply saying that there are some procedures in place. What is needed, as many members have said, is a full, open and public investigation into what happened yesterday on the picket line. I ask you, as the minister responsible for the Ontario Provincial Police, to

commit to a full and open investigation of the actions of the riot squad yesterday.

Hon Mr Runciman: The investigations that I mentioned may occur if there are formal complaints levied with the police complaints commission will not preclude any review of the occurrence by the Speaker. He's indicated earlier that he is going to respond to those requests.

In respect to the other allegations, the Leader of the Opposition has opted to attack the police officers, good men and women in this province, in my view, on the basis of what happened yesterday. We've heard allegations about the activities of the police in the hallways, and I can understand the concerns of laypeople with respect to those activities, but when they're dealing with those kinds of situations, this is a normal part of the process dealing with crowd control. It is a normal part of the process. I ask anyone who's served in this capacity, the former Solicitor General. This is a way of sending out a message to the crowd that we are coming and it's part of the normal process. I understand the suspicions of laypeople in dealing with these situations, but we're talking about a relatively small group—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Runciman: I guess they don't want to hear an answer, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Order. Minister?

Hon Mr Runciman: We're talking about a relatively small group of police officers having to go out and face hundreds, if not thousands, of protesters. I think under those circumstances we have to sit back and assess the challenge that they faced as well.

The Speaker: New question, the leader of the official opposition.

Mrs McLeod: Mr Speaker, obviously that issue is not over. I'm not going to pursue it beyond the call for there to be a full and open inquiry, because I am absolutely astounded that I've just heard the Solicitor General of this province seeming to condone the kind of violence that we saw directed against citizens of this province yesterday.

The Speaker: Who's your new question to?

Mrs McLeod: Mr Speaker, it's obviously very difficult to move to any other issue. There's been much discussion about the intimidation of members of the Legislature wanting to come into this place in order to do the business of the province. I can tell you, there is nothing more intimidating for me than the climate of seige which has been created around this building.

The Speaker: Who's your question to? Have you got a question?

TAX REDUCTION

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): I think it's important that we somehow find a way of putting in context what happened yesterday with the agenda of this government and the reality of the pain that's being caused to people across this province and that is going to dominate this session of the Legislature, because the climate of tension that's building across this province is not just around the Legislative Assembly; it is in every community of this province, where in the absence—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Who's the question to?

Mrs McLeod: I'm coming to the question, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: Who are you asking the question to?

Mrs McLeod: I'm asking the question to the Minister of Finance, who is ultimately—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Put your question.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The Leader of the Opposition.

Mrs McLeod: While this assembly has been adjourned, we have seen communities right across this province where thousands of teachers have received their pink slips. We have seen every community in this province affected by the fact that hundreds and hundreds of nurses' jobs and health care workers' jobs are on the line. We have seen support for special services at home withdrawn. And this government suggests that talking to the Minister of Finance about his agenda and the fact that it is being driven by a tax cut, by their determination to fulfil a totally irresponsible campaign promise that is causing people in this province this kind of pain, is some kind of social club question?

1510

The Speaker: What's your question, please?

Mrs McLeod: I ask the Minister of Finance: Given the fact that according to Revenue Canada, there are 20,800 Ontarians who each earn over \$250,000 a year—each—who under the Harris tax cut will get back a total of nearly half a billion dollars, why are you taking away the jobs of thousands of not only public sector workers but nurses and teachers to pay for a half-a-billion-dollar cash bonanza for the 23,000 wealthiest Ontarians?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): In response to the Leader of the Opposition, we are not, despite her protestations to the contrary, taking away thousands of jobs of Ontarians to finance a tax cut, and she knows that full well. That is not the case in the province of Ontario. That is not what the government of Ontario is doing. That's the answer to the question.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Supplementary.

Mrs McLeod: I can't imagine what the minister has just said to the people who were out on that picket line who don't know whether or not they're about to lose 13,000 jobs or 27,000 jobs, because we can't get a straight answer from Management Board or from the Minister of Finance, or what he's going to say to the teachers who got all the pink slips or the nurses who are being fired as we speak.

Minister, let me get you to focus on the question, because I believe that this pain is being driven by an irresponsible campaign promise and I think you know it is an irresponsible campaign promise.

According to Revenue Canada, there are a further 108,000 Ontarians who earn between \$100,000 and \$250,000 a year. Together, under the cash bonanza program for the wealthy, they will get nearly \$1 billion back. All told, the top 128,000 earners in Ontario will receive \$1.33 billion in tax rebates.

So I do ask you again: Why are teachers and nurses and public servants being fired, why are the oldest and the poorest Ontarians being asked to pay user fees on drugs, so that you can give \$1.3 billion in a cash bonanza back to the wealthiest Ontarians?

The Speaker: The question's been asked.

Hon Mr Eves: The Leader of the Opposition is going to have to wait until the government tables its budget in late April or early May to see exactly what the tax cut is and who receives what. She knows that's the case. She's known that's the case since June 8.

I want to put the Leader of the Opposition's comments into their proper context. This government in the province of Ontario inherited an accumulated deficit of almost \$100 billion. We inherited a government that spends \$1 million an hour more than it takes in in revenue. The Leader of the Opposition may find that acceptable—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon Mr Eves: We don't relish the expenditure reductions that we have to make, but I can tell the Leader of the Opposition one thing: If we had followed down the path of David Peterson and Bob Rae, my children, their children's children and their children wouldn't have a future in the province of Ontario, because we'd be spending \$20 billion a year in interest by the year 2000. That is the legacy that you and you have left the people of Ontario.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Mrs McLeod: And so you, Minister, in the name of a campaign promise, are prepared to add \$20 billion to the debt. Where is the common sense in that?

This minister talks about other governments—

Hon Mr Eves: You are as wrong as wrong can be.

The Speaker: Order.

Mrs McLeod: It is so clear what other government this government models itself after. In their ideological drive to bring in trickle-down economics, they want to follow the 12 years of trickle-down economics practised by Ronald Reagan and George Bush. Well, look what happened there, Minister, if you want an example of how your model works. It never trickled down, it just trickled up, and in the meantime the rich got richer and the poor got poorer and the gap between them got greater, and that is exactly what's happening in Mike Harris's Ontario.

Minister, I ask you again: How can you be so committed to delivering a \$1.3-billion cash bonanza to the most well-to-do people in this province while you slash thousands and thousands of jobs and while you slash services to the poorest and the sickest and the youngest and the oldest people of this province?

The Speaker: The question has been asked.

Hon Mr Eves: Mr Speaker, I say through you to the Leader of the Opposition that a tax reduction to hardworking, honest, taxpaying Ontarians I know is a foreign thought to her party, and certainly is a foreign thought to the predecessor to this government.

But I can tell you one thing, raising taxes 65 times in the last 10 years, personal income taxes 11 times in the last 10 years, certainly has not solved the problem of the

economy in the province of Ontario. If it had, unemployment would be zero, everybody in the province would have two jobs, and we would have a surplus this year instead of inheriting an \$11.2-billion deficit from our predecessor government.

We are trying to put money back in the hands of honest, hardworking, taxpaying Ontarians.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Put money back in the hands of the rich.

Hon Mr Eves: I know you're against that. You said so during the election campaign. How did you do?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Would the House come to order, please. The member for Lake Nipigon is out of order, and I won't warn him again.

Member for Algoma, new question.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): Interestingly enough, the experts from the Bank of Montreal and the Canadian Manufacturers' Association appearing before the committee have said that this tax cut will take money out of the economy, it will not produce jobs in this province. So it's not just the opposition saying it.

I'd like to ask a question of the—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Dufferin-Peel is out of order.

Mr Wildman: Your friends the bankers said that. They said they were going to pay down debt, they weren't going to spend money.

SECURITY OF LEGISLATIVE PRECINCT

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I've a question for the Deputy Premier. I'd like to return to the issue that was discussed at length at the outset of the session today, the images that we saw on the television last night, that some of us witnessed at first hand and that were reported in the press with the OPP riot squad clubbing its way through the crowd yesterday.

I want to make clear that in asking this question of the Deputy Premier we are not asking questions about the police action in itself per se, but who gave the orders, who made the decision and when that decision was made to call in the police riot squad, a squad that I saw on television a member of which was taunting the crowd—it didn't look like a disciplined member of a police force to me—which led to the injury of a member of the Metropolitan police who was trying to protect a striker, apparently from a blow being levied by a member of the OPP, and led one or two members of the strikers to be taken to hospital.

1520

Since the Speaker has said he will take under advisement the proposal of our caucus and the Liberal caucus for a public inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act, will the Deputy Premier, on behalf of the government, keeping in mind the comments made by his leader yesterday that an appropriate investigation will be taken if there was inappropriate action, now agree to an independent public inquiry into the decisions that led to the police action yesterday under the Public Inquiries Act?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): I want to say

at the outset, and I think any member who knows me in the 15 years that I've been in this Legislature knows, that I certainly am concerned about the actions of many people, protestors and officers alike, in yesterday's activities.

I would like to say to the leader of the third party that for our caucus as well, our caucus chairman has written to the Speaker asking for a full report on yesterday's actions. I think it would behoove all of us in this chamber to take a few steps back, await the Speaker's report, see what it says. I for one would be more than pleased, on behalf of the government, to commit at the very least that that report will be sent to the Legislative Assembly committee. That committee, as the leader knows, has the full authority to call witnesses before it and to further investigate the matter.

But I think it would really be presumptuous of me or anybody, quite frankly, to make any further comment until we at least give the Speaker, who's charged with security in this place, an opportunity to table his report and see what it says.

Mr Wildman: With respect, that just is not adequate. We recall that in October commitments were made that there would be a report given. I understand that such a report would be prepared by the OPP, submitted to the Speaker and then provided to a committee, and that just didn't happen. We didn't get to it, and there were months of delay and nothing happened.

This is a matter of such great import that it must be dealt with immediately, and it must be dealt with in a public way. So I again reiterate my request that on behalf of the government the Deputy Premier commit to a public inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act, not a referral of a report to the Speaker to a legislative committee, but one that is under the procedures of the law that are well understood and will ensure that all of the issues, all of the decisions, will be looked into very carefully and understood clearly so that we can then make a decision subsequently, perhaps, as a Legislature on how to deal with proper security around this place.

Hon Mr Eves: I would say to the honourable member that I still believe we need to see the Speaker's response and report before we decide what the next step would be. I would say to the honourable member that I agree that whatever the solution is and whatever the report has in it should be public, but I think—

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): Who is going to prepare the report?

Hon Mr Eves: That is the Speaker's function, I say to the member for Windsor-Riverside. The Speaker is going to report back to the members on yesterday's activities, and I think it behooves all of us to allow him that opportunity.

Mr Wildman: Again, with respect, I just refer to the report on the CTV National News last evening, and I'm quoting: "The police created a V-wedge. They got them in, then the riot squad stood there hitting the person standing in front of me trying to get out, hitting him in the back of the knee. It's about as big as a grapefruit. The police were out of control."

The question is, who will make the report to the Speaker? If you're simply requesting a report from the

police on the police action, that isn't adequate. We want to go beyond the actions to the decisions that led to those actions, and that's why we need to have a report immediately and it's why this government must make it clear that they are prepared to have a full public airing of this matter under the Public Inquiries Act. So again, I ask the Deputy Premier to make clear that this government wants this matter aired in a public manner under the law that sets forward the procedures under that act.

Hon Mr Eves: I again say, I think that we at least owe it to the Speaker, who is charged with security in this place and on these precincts, to report back to the members—

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): You're stonewalling.

Hon Mr Eves: I am not stonewalling, I say to the member for Lake Nipigon, and he knows better than that.

I think that we should await that report from the Speaker and then we should collectively make a decision as to where we go from there.

Mr Wildman: Mr Speaker, I would go now, I guess, to the minister responsible for the police, the Solicitor General.

I remember very well on many occasions when the member for Leeds-Grenville sat on this side of the House, his approach to questions regarding police activity and issues related to whether or not decisions were made that were proper with regard to direction of the police. With that in mind, I would hope that this minister would be as disturbed as we are by reports in the public press attributed to a Metro Toronto police officer that the OPP tactical unit were "acting like animals." To understand the context of that in this province, this democratic province, a TV cameraman is quoted as saying, "They were just whaling away." We all saw the member of the OPP tactical squad blowing kisses to the crowd after the police activity.

With that in mind, would the Solicitor General, who has responsibility for the OPP, fulfil that responsibility by making a clear report as to the decisions around security around this place, who requested the tactical squad, the riot squad, to come to the Legislature, when that request was made and who made the decision to ask them to take action?

Hon Bob Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I'm not certain about the protocol surrounding the release of the security plan that was submitted to the Sergeant at Arms by the security service in the Legislature, but certainly I'm prepared to take a look at what process is involved.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order. The member for Ottawa West is out of order.

Hon Mr Runciman: If it's feasible, I'm sure it can be considered, but beyond that I cannot go.

At this point, I want to say there have been some suggestions of interference here, implications of that by both opposition parties, and I want to stress that the ministry in no way gets involved in operational decisions of police services. If we did, you would be the first to be on your feet charging us with political interference.

Mr Wildman: I guess it's a case of "That was then and this is now." Members of the squad were heard

saying, "Use whatever force is necessary." Does the minister responsible for the OPP have any concerns about that? Is he concerned about what happened yesterday at all, or is he, as was quoted and as was repeated today by him, supporting the actions of the police and the decision that was made to bring them into this matter in the first place? Will the minister make clear what his view is as he understands the situation with regard to the measures taken by the police, the approach they took, and will he make clear what his view is of the decision to bring them into the situation in the first place?

Hon Mr Runciman: I'm not going to respond to anonymous allegations and hearsay. What I will say is the comments that were attributed to me yesterday dealt with my own personal experience and that of the Minister of Transportation and the member for Oshawa. That's all I could respond to directly: my own personal experience. I do not have any information on the other allegations that have been made.

1530

I have indicated to you that there are processes available for complaints against the police. Those can be exercised. On the other allegations and charges surrounding the bigger question, if you will, on police conduct, the Speaker has made a commitment today to review that. Following the Deputy Premier's suggestion, I think we should await that report, and if indeed it calls for further action we can consider that at that time.

Mr Wildman: I'm very concerned about the Solicitor General's response. Can the Solicitor General explain? Does he not believe, as minister responsible for the OPP, that in making statements "that the police had handled themselves very well; they acted with great restraint in situations I observed because they were being provoked," and is he not concerned that he may by making those statements have prejudiced any type of investigation that takes place into this matter, because he has already made his position clear, it appears, that he believes the police were provoked and acted appropriately?

Hon Mr Runciman: The leader of the third party can paint it any way he wishes, and I'm sure he will. I indicated, I've indicated it here today, I indicated it yesterday, that I was responding to my own particular experience and that of two other members of my caucus. I wasn't talking about any other incident that occurred.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING COMMUNICATIONS

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Education and Training. It has to do with an issue that I think is consistent with what I regard as the bullying tactics of this government.

There is a highly regarded elementary school principal in my constituency who sent a letter to the community outlining her concerns around cutbacks in education. She then got from the minister's office, from his political staff, three phone calls, and here's what the principal wrote down verbatim. The principal is an individual whom I have a good deal of confidence in, and she said this is what your political staff said—and I believe this to

be the case—to the principal: "You have overstepped your bounds as a principal. You have no business revealing information to your community in such a partisan manner." Then it goes on to say, "I am going to report you to your board and I'm going to talk to"—and then your political staff named a reporter in a major Toronto daily. This is a verbatim quote from your own political staff. I find it threatening, intimidating and chilling that your political staff would phone up a principal and threaten the principal in this way.

I went to the superintendent whom this principal reports to and I said, "Are you aware of this?" Your political staff had also phoned that superintendent, again with the same threatening tone.

My question is this—because I believe that your staff did this, and I think it is part of the bullying tactics of this government—will you today assure the House that you will first apologize to that principal and, secondly, that you will ensure that this not happen again in the future?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I yesterday heard about this incident. I have asked my staff to investigate it. I can give you some preliminary information. Apparently, there was a letter sent out by a principal. Apparently, we received some complaints from the public about a letter that had been sent home by a principal to parents' homes via the children and we did investigate this at the time. A member of my staff did contact the principal to ask for three things.

One of those things was to provide a clean copy of the letter that had been sent home—obviously, we need to respond to the public inquiries that were made of our office—secondly, to inform the principal that, along with several other errors apparently contained in the letter, the phone number for our office was wrong, so they would get the correct phone number for our office. The preliminary investigation will be that those inquiries and that response were very appropriate.

Mr Phillips: I sent a letter to the minister, as he knows, a week and a half ago on this matter. This matter took place at least two weeks ago. It is crystal clear that your staff threatened this principal. We've been through this before with the minister responsible for women's issues, who threatened a battered women's group in London with withdrawing funding from it.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order.

Mr Phillips: We have a signed affidavit saying she did that.

Now we find the Minister of Education and Training's staff threatening a principal. I find it objectionable and totally unacceptable. The question is this: Will you investigate this thoroughly? Will you confirm, by talking to the principal, to the superintendent and the director of education that this took place? And will you report back to the House quickly with an apology to the principal and an assurance that this will not be allowed to continue?

The Speaker: The question's been asked.

Hon Mr Snobelen: In response, I think I've already answered that question. Of course I would be concerned

if a member of my staff left some concern with a member of the public, and certainly someone in the education department. I have asked someone on my staff to investigate this matter. When I get the report, I will take the appropriate action.

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): On a point of personal privilege, Mr Speaker: In response to the accusation made across the House that I intimidated people—

The Speaker: It can be raised after question period.

Hon Mrs Cunningham: I can raise it, Mr Speaker?

The Speaker: After question period you can raise it.

LABOUR LEGISLATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): In the absence of the Minister of Labour, my question is to the Deputy Premier. Deputy Premier, it was just last October when your government took great glee in introducing and then ramming through your anti-worker Bill 7. That then laid the groundwork for the strike that we now have in the province of Ontario with OPSEU members, because one of the things you did in that bill was to take away successorship rights to people in the public sector. You did not include that in your Common Sense Revolution, you did not talk about that on the campaign trail, and yet as soon as you took power you rammed through legislation that took away those rights from workers. That has now, as I said, laid the groundwork for the kind of strike and picketing that we're seeing across the province right now.

What I want to know from you, Minister, is will you now admit that yesterday's violence on the picket line is just the beginning of an escalation of picket line violence that we will see during the entire term of your office? Will you admit now that's what your Bill 7 is doing, Minister?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): Of course I wouldn't admit that and the member fully well knows. I don't judge union members or any other group in society by the inappropriate actions of a few, and I think he should bear that in mind himself.

Mr Christopherson: More and more the arrogance tends to come through. You talk about inappropriate behaviour, and yet Ontarians are standing by watching you decimate and dismantle everything of value in this province. All your colleagues around are shaking their heads like this is some idea that you've never heard of before.

The fact of the matter is that in that same piece of legislation, Bill 7, you've also now allowed scabs. You've made it legal in this province once again, after it was made illegal, to allow scabs. What does that mean? It means the police are called in—usually against their will, in my opinion—but police are called in and they do exactly what happened yesterday: They force honest, decent, hardworking people who are on a lawful picket line to be pushed aside so scabs can go through. Yesterday it was you; tomorrow it's the scabs. What will you do to ensure this kind of violence does not happen again?

1540

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The question's been asked.

Hon Mr Eves: I understand that the member from Hamilton has a certain leadership campaign he's running in—

Interjections: No, no.

Hon Mr Eves: He's not running? Okay, sorry, I apologize. He sure sounded like a guy who was running. It sure sounded like the member is one of them.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Would the House come to order, please.

Hon Mr Eves: If he's not running, I apologize. I'm sorry.

To suggest that the inappropriate actions of a few people yesterday were somehow precipitated by Bill 7 is totally inappropriate. I understand that groups in society have the right to lawfully strike. I understand that full well. And this issue will be resolved at the bargaining table, not on the picket lines. We were at the bargaining table yesterday, we are at the bargaining table today, and that is where the resolution of this matter will be had.

SCHOOL FACILITIES

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): My question is to the Minister of Education and Training. I hope he will be able to clarify the status of two important school projects in my riding. There are currently renovations at Ridgeway and Crystal Beach High School, and Bertie elementary is slated for heating and ventilation improvements under the Canada-Ontario infrastructure program. What effects will the construction moratorium have on these very important projects?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I know the member for Niagara South will understand that I don't have the details here of every project in the province of Ontario, but I am very willing to share the criteria for this moratorium.

First, schools that are already under construction, or renovation projects that are already under way will be completed and will proceed under this moratorium.

Second, schools that are authorized under the Canada-Ontario infrastructure works program will be funded for the fiscal year 1996-97.

Third, in addition, several schools slated for asbestos removal or fire and safety upgrades will proceed.

In total, some 228 projects currently under way in the province of Ontario will proceed during this moratorium.

Mr Hudak: Along the same line, I've heard in media reports that the minister will be commissioning a review of the ministry's school construction program. What kinds of alternative funding arrangements and design types will the review be examining?

Hon Mr Snobelen: The honourable member is quite correct. We are currently looking at designing a review process so that we can have a look at how schools are constructed in other parts of Ontario. We're looking at design-build-leaseback scenarios, we're looking at third-party construction initiatives, we're looking at changes in the grant structure that will allow us to accommodate the

children of this province in working schools in the generation to come.

KARLA HOMOLKA

Ms Annamarie Castrilli (Downsview): My question is for the Attorney General. Minister, the long-awaited Homolka affair report has now been issued and Mr Justice Patrick Galligan's conclusion is that nothing should be done to either reopen the Homolka plea-bargaining or to lay additional charges.

You may recall that you stated in the House in November when you announced the inquiry, "The citizens of this province have a right to a complete explanation of the decisions made"—your quote. I submit to you that the citizens of this province did not get a complete explanation and I submit to you that the results were predictable from the beginning.

Judge Galligan's competence and integrity are not in issue here; they are beyond reproach. But what is not beyond reproach is this government's credibility. You tied his hands with terms of reference that were so narrow that they could not allow a full public airing of the facts. Is it not true that he could subpoena a witness to testify under oath? Is it not true that such a crucial player as Paul Bernardo's initial lawyer could not be and was not available even for an interview because he is the subject of another investigation? Minister, how can you believe that justice has been well served in these circumstances?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): First of all, you refer to the conclusions of Justice Galligan's report. Now I would urge you to read the report to see how he got to the conclusions and then come back and tell me that was not a complete report, a comprehensive report and a report that was sensitive to the victims and their families. I think it behooves you to read that report thoroughly before you make allegations such as the one you've made.

Implicit in your question as well is the fact that there was not, as a term of reference, an inquiry made of Mr Murray. You answer your own question; you answer your own query: Quite simply because he is the subject of a police investigation, and you should know that because of that he would not, nor should he; nor would the judge who was inquiring into this suggest that he make form of disclosure. That's quite simply why that was not part of the terms of reference of this report.

The other thing I refer to are the comments of your own House leader who had praise for this report but who very succinctly and very properly indicated exactly what the problem with the report is, and that is that we are so profoundly disappointed that this particular deal had to be made that it is very difficult for the public to understand and accept the conclusions, because they are so disappointing, they're so despicable to all of us. But in a purely legal sense, if you read the report, the judge is very clear about why this had to happen. As your House leader so succinctly put it, the report is good, the conclusions are proper. The task here is that people read the report and try and understand it. It's difficult because the conclusions that it reaches are not something that any of us can be happy about.

Ms Castrilli: I need no lectures from the minister on either the report, which by the way, sir, I have read in its entirety, or the conclusions that were given. My quibble is not with the report. Mr Justice Galligan did in fact do what he did, and he did it admirably. That's not the issue. The issue is that the terms of reference were incomplete, they were not adequate. Quite frankly, even if you don't believe me, the outrage of people who have been calling my office and, I'm sure, your office is testimony to that.

But let me say more: Justice Galligan himself notes in his conclusion that the terms of reference leave something to be desired. He states, and I concur with him, that there is a need for rules in plea bargaining and in offences that are committed in more than one jurisdiction. I ask you in the public interest, at the very least, to commit to send such matters to the standing committee on administration of justice to establish clear guidelines to ensure that another Homolka tragedy does not happen again.

Hon Mr Harnick: Justice Galligan made very important recommendations pertaining to those two issues and he made those recommendations as a result of a very thorough review of this whole issue. Of course, I hope that the standing committee on administration of justice will under the rules, as you well know them, have an opportunity to examine into those very issues. Certainly people at the ministry have indicated already a willingness and a desire to begin the process of setting out clearly answers to what Justice Galligan has said. They're very important.

That's exactly why we had this examination, so that we could do a better job with the administration of justice. Where there's improvement, we want to make it. That's exactly the kind of recommendation that we want to respond to and will respond to. Any advice that you could give us through bringing, through the standing orders, a request for a hearing, which you have the right to do, a referral, we are delighted that you do that and undertake to do that.

I hope that maybe pursuant to the standing orders there will be unanimous consent to spend X number of hours, an adequate number of hours, to do just that. But certainly the ministry is doing it. Any help that the justice committee can provide, we would be interested in, and any help that you could provide in dealing with those issues, we would be grateful for.

1550

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE DISPUTE

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): My question is for the Chair of Management Board. Minister, you've presented yourself so far in this House and in your tenure as a calm and rational person. You have watched yesterday and today and on previous occasions some of the activity that has taken place around this building and across the province. You have, with us, witnessed blood being spilled at least twice now very publicly in front of this building.

The first time it was in response to what we see as a violation of agreements that we all came to around how the poor of this province should be dealt with, with

compassion and some degree of understanding of their real need.

Yesterday, I suggest, the activities were a product of pent-up frustration because of the strike that's in front of us today. I would ask you to confront your colleagues in cabinet and your government to begin to act in accord with the highest values and principles and traditions which governments in this province over the years have used, values of balance, fairness and respect for the process in this place.

I ask you in the context of the very troubling activity of yesterday and of October of last year—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Would the member put his question, please.

Mr Martin: —and in the context of this government's need to act in a fair and responsible manner, will you table an offer in this difficult OPSEU labour dispute that has some potential to be successful in achieving an agreement?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I wish to assure the member for Sault Ste Marie that in fact the government has tabled a final offer. This was some time ago. One week ago today, the government did table amendments to that offer. In an endeavour to be fair and reasonable, the government did make movements in different areas. For example, part of that offer one week ago today involved job matching, which enhances job security for members of OPSEU.

I wish to assure the member that the government is at the table. There is a media blackout under way. Obviously, I can't give the details of what is on the table at this point in time. But it certainly is in my interests and the government's interests that we resolve this settlement at the earliest opportunity, but that we do so in a manner that's both fair to the employees and fair and affordable to the taxpayers of the province of Ontario.

Mr Martin: I would say to the minister that I'm a bit disappointed but not surprised. We hear again a continuation of the rhetoric of this government as they try to paint a picture for us all that really is not true.

I would ask the minister, in light of some of the comments yesterday to the leader of our party re the question of successor rights, where he made flippant and off-the-cuff comments about a very serious issue that is on the table, will you, Minister, please stop the rhetoric? Will you start facing the truth as it confronts us in this province and start telling the truth and be consistent in the information you use for your own purposes with the public and in this House and at the OPSEU bargaining table so that we might get an agreement?

Hon David Johnson: I would say again that the government, certainly in my estimation and in the estimation of many people who are contacting me directly, has put an offer on the table that is fair and reasonable to the degree that it involves, for example, added cost to the taxpayers of the province of Ontario between \$150 million and \$200 million. Now that's a great deal of money.

I think it recognizes the value of the members of OPSEU. I certainly myself value the services that the members of OPSEU have given to the province of

Ontario over many years. In terms of successor rights, the negotiations I'm involved with, we have put on the table our offer to make reasonable efforts to attempt, if a function in the province of Ontario is privatized, outsourced, contracted out, to speak with the new employer in an attempt that the employees could move with that particular job.

This is, I might say, an approach that another union in the province of Ontario, AMAPCEO, has accepted through a tentative agreement. They have found this approach to be reasonable and I would hope, in the final analysis, that OPSEU would find it reasonable as well.

WORKFARE

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): My question today is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. During the past several weeks while the House was in recess, I have had the opportunity to meet with many of my constituents in Scarborough Centre. A number of these constituents are anxious to hear the details of our government's workfare plans.

I wonder if the minister might reassure the House of our commitment to implementing workfare and update the members on what the timetable might be to introduce the workfare plan. I also ask the minister if he would assure this House that our workfare plan is not a make-work project.

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Community and Social Services): First of all, I'd like to make it perfectly clear that this program is going to be mandatory. Second, it will require all able-bodied people on welfare to work for their benefits.

We're right on track. One of the things we've looked at when we're trying to find the proper solution for Ontario, is that we've looked at other jurisdictions, we've looked at Alberta, we've looked at Quebec and New Brunswick, we've looked at the States and some international areas, but one thing we've concluded is we need a made-in-Ontario solution. Therefore, this spring we will be making the details known of our made-in-Ontario solution.

I'd also like to point out that we have had a committee of MPPs working on the actual structure of workfare. We've also been working to look at some of the programs that will work. We will continue to consult through our MPPs and also carry on the discussions we've had before.

Second, the member has asked whether or not the allegations out there with respect to make-work projects are true. Certainly not. Our objective is to make sure that the community has improved somehow. I will just share with you one quick example.

I had the opportunity to be out in Oshawa with our member there, Jerry Ouellette, and it happened to be in our member John O'Toole's area, an area called Camp Samac, which is a project run by the Scouts and supported by the Kiwanis Club and in fact has received a grant of \$100,000 from GM. This is a project that will improve the community, and these people who will work on this program will have received training and will receive the networking possible to receive real jobs.

REPORT, INTEGRITY COMMISSIONER

Hon Dianne Cunningham (Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues): On a point of personal privilege, Mr Speaker: On November 21, 1995, the member for Riverdale filed a request for the opinion of the Integrity Commissioner, the Honourable Gregory T. Evans, on a matter alleging that I, as the member for London North, in my role as minister responsible for women's issues, have contravened the Members' Integrity Act, 1994.

I received the report from the justice on December 13, 1995, and would like to read into the record the opinion:

"Section 35 of the act states: 'If the commissioner is of the opinion that the referral of a matter to him or her is frivolous, vexatious or not made in good faith or that there are no grounds or insufficient grounds for an inquiry, commissioners shall not conduct an inquiry and shall state the reasons for not doing so in the report.' In my opinion, section 35 applies and there are no grounds requiring me to hold an inquiry."

1600

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING
COMMUNICATIONS

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): In relation to a question raised by my friend the member for Scarborough-Agincourt a moment ago, the Minister of Education and Training said that he was calling for an inquiry or he was investigating the alleged intimidation of a school principal in my friend's riding.

I want to point out to you that the minister may have inadvertently misled the House in his answer, since I have a letter, dated March 7, to Ms Joan Westcott of the Federation of Women Teachers' Associations of Ontario signed by John Weir, the executive assistant to the minister, in which Mr Weir says:

"Our office must address the concerns of all stakeholders in the process of educating the children of the province. Mr Macklem was only investigating some complaints directed to this office and would have been remiss in his duties if he had not done so. I feel my staff member performed the job that I would expect of him."

It appears from this letter from the minister's executive assistant that the minister's executive assistant is quite satisfied with the actions taken by the staff member. That does not seem to corroborate what the minister said in answer to the member for Scarborough-Agincourt.

PETITIONS

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): It is my pleasure to present to the Legislature a petition in regard to the crazy proposed tax cuts.

"We, the undersigned, request that the Legislature of Ontario not approve any crazy tax cuts which cause more poverty and unemployment in Ontario, and until these are dealt with effectively, the province should not proceed with this crazy tax cut."

I affix my name to it.

ST JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition from my community of Hamilton Centre regarding St Joseph's Hospital.

"Whereas the Hamilton-Wentworth Health Action Task Force, as part of their report, has recommended the closure of St Joseph's Hospital in Hamilton; and

"Whereas it is recognized the health care system should be made as efficient as possible; and

"Whereas the quality of health care service in our community should not be sacrificed in the name of this efficiency; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government promised to protect the quality of health care in Ontario; and

"Whereas we, the undersigned, believe that maintaining the presence of St Joseph's Hospital in downtown Hamilton is a vital component of our health care system,

"Therefore be it resolved that the Minister of Health and the Hamilton-Wentworth District Health Council ensure the continuance of the St Joseph's Hospital at its present site."

I proudly add my name to theirs.

PHYSICIAN SHORTAGE

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the city of Sudbury has a shortage of family and general practitioners,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to designate Sudbury as a medically underserved area."

I have affixed my name to this as I agree with it.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have two petitions signed by approximately 110 constituents from Iron Bridge and from the township of Prince in my riding. They both deal with the same topic. I'll read one of them.

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation is intent on reducing northern winter road maintenance services; and

"Whereas such downgrading places the lives of northern residents at undue and unnecessary risk,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to disallow these reductions in service and to guarantee that winter roads across northern regions of the province receive the necessary maintenance to ensure the safe passage of drivers."

I affix my name thereto.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): To the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government plans to sell off public services to corporations who will run them for profit; and

"Whereas in the corporate takeover it would be strictly user pay for the services we now depend on; and

"Whereas our clean air and water standards and worker safety rules are being relaxed because corporations don't like rules that interfere with profits; and

"Whereas privatization is being sold as a way to save tax dollars, even though large companies pay little or no taxes while individual Canadians pay most of the total tax bill; and

"Whereas Bill 7 was introduced in the interests of facilitating its privatization agenda by stripping public sector workers of their rights to retain fair working conditions when services are transferred or privatized;

"We, the following citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to abandon the sell-off of Ontario public services and reinstate successor rights for public service employees."

I've affixed my signature to this.

NORONTAIR

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I want to present a petition here that perhaps is a little after the fact but nevertheless needs to be read into the record. Because of the speed at which this government operates, sometimes people don't get a chance to exercise their legitimate democratic rights. It's signed by about 500 people from across northern Ontario, places like Geraldton, Thunder Bay, Nipigon, Sault Ste Marie, Longlac, Hearst, Kirkland Lake, Englehart, Nakina. The list goes on and on. It says this:

"Due to our isolation and great distances between communities and the larger cities in the north, we require reliable air service to have access to medical services and to maintain a competitive economy.

"We, the residents of northern Ontario, do hereby petition the government of Ontario to reconsider its decision to pull norOntair air services from our community."

I sign my signature to this petition.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I have a petition signed by my constituents to add to the petition by the member for Hamilton Centre. It's to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Common Sense Revolution states that a Conservative government will not cut health care funding; and

"Whereas in the 1995 election campaign, the Conservatives clearly promised to defend the health care system by protecting ministry funding, stating in a campaign backgrounder, 'There'll be no cuts to health care funding by a Harris government,' and calling this their first and most important commitment;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, call on the Minister of Health to reject all recommendations put forward by the health care task force as relate to any hospital closures in Hamilton-Wentworth, particularly St Joseph's Hospital on Charlton Avenue."

I add my signature to that petition.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): I have a petition signed by several people, Ontario residents. It's addressed

to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Bill 26 exempts the government as an employer from key legislation governing pensions in Ontario; and

"Whereas employees of the Ontario government have been stripped of their right to access pension security"—that's really all they have—"a right that other workers in Ontario have; and

"Whereas this represents the theft of hundreds of millions of dollars in pension benefits from working people; and

"Whereas as a result thousands of workers who face being laid off in the coming months could be forced into poverty;

"We, the following undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to reinstate the rights removed by schedule L of the infamous Bill 26."

I have affixed my signature and my support to the petition.

TEACHER TRAINING

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): I have a petition signed by 146 residents of my riding and across eastern Ontario. It reads as follows:

"To the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the teachers of Ontario are already accountable to the province of Ontario through the Ontario Teachers' Federation; and

"Whereas the proposed College of Teachers will create a new, unneeded and costly bureaucracy;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"To refrain from enacting legislation with respect to the College of Teachers."

I've also signed this petition.

COMMON SENSE REVOLUTION

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I have a petition which is signed by literally hundreds of seniors who live in the Sudbury basin. The petition was sponsored from two groups: the Rockview Seniors Co-op Inc and Steelworkers' Retirees, Chapter 2, and it reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned seniors, families, supporting groups and people of Ontario, are now petitioning the Premier and all the members of the Ontario government to stop the Common Sense Revolution which deprives the elderly and favours the greedy, non-caring rich. We list some of our concerns." They are as follows:

"Health care comes first and hospital closures plus cuts in services affect seniors very seriously.

"Co-op and non-profit housing should be increased and subsidized to provide for the growing number of seniors, instead of cutbacks which please greedy landlords.

"Pensions should be properly indexed to the true cost of living, with no cutbacks.

"Welfare payments should be adjusted to meet the needs of many unfortunate seniors.

"Unemployment ranks high as a concern among seniors who are very worried about the layoffs of their sons, daughters and their grandchildren.

"Please stop your Common Sense Revolution, as it affects our seniors so adversely while favouring the rich."

I have affixed my signature to it and I agree with the petitioners entirely.

1610

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I have a petition signed by 30 residents of my riding, and I point out that it's not on the proper form.

"We taxpayers do not support the measures taken against OPSEU by the Harris government. We find these tactics both unfair and undemocratic."

I affix my name to this petition.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): The member for Kingston and The Islands—sorry, Essex South. It's been a while. Sorry about that.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): Thank you, Madam Speaker. If I had to be from anywhere, Kingston and The Islands would maybe be the next-best place. I'm not sure.

I have a petition that's been given to me by the Friends of the Leamington Public Library, and it's regarding the repeal of the Public Libraries Act. It's addressed to the Legislature of Ontario, and has a number of whereases that indicate their concern. It concludes by saying:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To oppose the repeal of the Public Libraries Act, the imposition of fees for the use of public libraries, the elimination of provincial conditional grants to public libraries and the eradication of library boards, and to support free public libraries as the foundation of a literate, informed and prosperous population."

I affix my signature to this petition.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the members of the Ontario public service are earnestly attempting to negotiate an equitable and respectful collective agreement with the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas a fair collective agreement is evidence of this government's respect for Ontario's public services, the workers who provide them and those who need them; and

"Whereas by introducing Bill 7 and Bill 26 prior to commencing negotiations, the government removed significant rights from OPSEU members that other workers in Ontario retain; and

"Whereas reducing the size of the civil service can be achieved through attrition without attacking basic rights and dignities of hardworking people;

"We, the following undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to negotiate responsibly and in good faith with the Ontario Public Service Employees Union towards a fair and respectful collective agreement."

This is signed by more than 70 people from my riding of London and around London, and I have affixed my signature to it.

TRANSITION HOUSE

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Further petitions? The member for Windsor-Walkerville.

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): Essex Kent.

The Acting Speaker: I am getting them mixed up today. I obviously have to go back to the drawing board. Excuse me.

Mr Hoy: I don't look anything like the member.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Transition House in Chatham has provided emergency shelter to troubled or abused youth as well as support, counselling and life skills training since 1990, and, operating on a five-year budget of \$865,000, they have counselled over 400 youth and served over 20,000 meals;

"Whereas the city of Chatham and the county of Kent rely on Transition House to meet the needs of its troubled youth and there is no other facility to serve the needs of the community; and

"Whereas many of the youth who end up at Transition House suffer from attention-deficit disorder, Tourette's syndrome, fetal alcohol syndrome and other diseases and cannot function in a normal school environment, and since new welfare legislation requires welfare recipients to be in school or training, some severely disadvantaged youth who might be at risk at home are not qualified for welfare assistance; and

"Whereas the principles of discipline, self-help and regimented environment at Transition House have combined with the counselling and support to provide youth with the motivation and self-respect to return to school or find jobs; and

"Whereas it has been shown that massive cuts to health services, school systems and social services have a definite impact on the statistics of children and youth in crisis; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has cut its direct funding to Transition House by almost \$48,000 annually and places the existence of Transition House in jeopardy;

"Be it therefore resolved that we, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to reverse its decision to cut the funding of Transition House in Chatham."

I affix my name.

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I have a petition sent to me by Susan Marrier of Thunder Bay which joins a growing chorus of support for those who are opposed to this government's 30% tax cut, an irresponsible cut that cannot be condoned at this time. The petition reads:

"We, the undersigned, request that the Legislature of Ontario not approve any tax cuts until the causes of poverty and unemployment in Ontario are dealt with effectively and until the province's debt and deficit are paid down."

I'm proud to sign my signature to this.

COMMON SENSE REVOLUTION

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I have a petition that is signed by several hundred people who live in the good riding of Sudbury East and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Mike Harris said on May 30, 1995, 'If I don't live up to anything that I have promised to do and committed to do, I will resign;' and

"Whereas Mike Harris promised on May 3, 1995, 'No cuts to health care spending,' but in his November 29 economic statement we see \$1.3 billion in cuts to hospital spending; and

"Whereas Mike Harris promised in the Common Sense Revolution that, 'This plan will create more than 725,000 new jobs,' but in his November 29 economic statement we see a prediction of only 253,000 jobs created over the next three years and an unemployment rate of 8.6% in two years; and

"Whereas Mike Harris promised in the Common Sense Revolution, 'Aid for seniors and the disabled will not be cut,' but in his November 29 economic statement is cutting the drug benefit plan and making seniors and the vulnerable pay;

"We, the undersigned, demand that Mike Harris keep his word and resign immediately."

I agree with the petitioners and I have affixed my signature to this petition.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

ASSOCIATION OF ONTARIO ROAD SUPERINTENDENTS ACT, 1996

Mr Arnott moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr53, An Act respecting the Association of Ontario Road Superintendents.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CONCURRENCE IN SUPPLY

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for concurrence in supply for the following ministries:

Ministry of Education and Training

Ministry of Education and Training, supplementary

Ministry of Community and Social Services

Ministry of Housing

Ministry of Transportation

Ministry of Transportation, supplementary

Ministry of Health

Ministry of Health, supplementary

Ministry of Economic Development and Trade

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): I recognize the member for St Catharines.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Thank you kindly, Madam Speaker, for the opportunity to speak on concurrences. I will be, of course, germane as always during this debate.

I want to first address the background to these concurrences, and that is the atmosphere that I see in the province of Ontario. Some of us had an opportunity earlier in the day to talk about the incidents which have occurred in and around this building over the past couple of weeks and in particular the major confrontation that took place yesterday. As I look at the various ministries and their expenditures, or their lack of expenditures, and the policies they're pursuing, I can see that we are as a province being deeply divided.

The confrontation, the anger and the division which we see are uncharacteristic, I believe, to Ontario, where successive governments have endeavoured to provide an opportunity for consensus and conciliation as opposed to major confrontations. There have been honest disagreements that have occurred between governments and opposition, between various groups and interests in our society. Largely they have been settled by trying to bring people together to develop a consensus. I understand that in the mid-1990s this isn't as attractive politically, because the image that governments wish to portray revolves around strength, not backing down, being lacking—let's say lacking—in conciliation as opposed to trying to bring people together, trying to reason with people.

1620

We have a strike going on in the province of Ontario at this time. Members of the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, if you think about it over the years, are hardly the most militant people that you would find. Many have said that they have served successive governments with loyalty and with dedication and with a sense of fulfilment in terms of the contribution they've been able to make to this province.

So when we look at the government confronting this particular organization, it is not as though they are confronting a union which is known for being militant or whose actions tend to be more aggressive than other unions. They themselves, the other unions, may be proud of those actions, but I can say that OPSEU is not what we would call a militant union.

They are confronted with a very difficult circumstance, that is, the possibility of up to 27,000 people losing their jobs in this province. This is of consequence not only for those who lose their jobs and those close to them, because that is important to those people, but it is of consequence to the people of the province at large, who will not have available to them the kinds of services that Canadians and the people of Ontario have had in years gone by. Indeed, many of our American friends have looked with envy to Ontario, and to certain other provinces which have provided those services, which have been civil in their outlook. We will find, if we lose those 27,000 public servants, and many beyond the provincial public service, that we're going to have a distinct diminishing of the services provided to people in this province.

It is not only the provincial civil servants that we're talking about. We are talking as well about people within the realms of boards of education, municipalities and agencies, boards and commissions that have provided service, that have contributed to the quality of life in Ontario.

In my view, the government is moving far too quickly and far too drastically. If you asked anybody of any political background who wanted to be reasonable, the people would say yes, we have to do something. We have to try to deliver services in a more economical way, in a less costly way. I don't think there's a debate. Even those who are considered to be socialist in background would not even argue with that.

Indeed, the previous NDP government had to undertake a significant downsizing when it was in power, and I know that members of the New Democratic Party, for instance, did not look forward to raising tuition by 42%. They did not want to do that because it was in their platform that they would abolish it. I know from speaking to individual members of that party and to the Premier of the day that this was a difficult decision, but they were decisions that were taken by that government.

And when there were layoffs in the civil service, as there have been since 1990 because of the deep recession we were in, because of the economic circumstances, there weren't people I think in the previous government who looked upon this as a nice thing to have to do, but it was nevertheless, in their mind, essential. When they abrogated the contracts of public service workers in this province, they felt—Premier Rae said this on many occasions—that this was the best, in his view, of many difficult choices that governments had to make.

I'm saying that no matter which party would assume office after the last election, there would be difficult and challenging decisions to make. But it's the manner in which this government has undertaken those decisions, the speed and the degree of change that is taking place, that is causing disruption in this province, in my view.

As I mentioned earlier and many other members have mentioned, the sight of police dogs, police on horseback, the riot squad we saw yesterday banging its shields in military fashion, and paddy wagons, the whole presence of almost an armed camp in and around Queen's Park makes all of us feel uneasy. It's not an image we want to project to others whom we would like to have invest here and visit here, and it's one that makes most Ontarians feel concerned and I think a bit apprehensive.

The kind of governing that we've seen has not been conciliatory. I understand—I think some of the members have said it well—that there are honest differences of opinion. I happen to disagree with some of the policies—not all of the policies; some of the policies—the government is bringing forward. I was adamantly opposed to the manner in which it introduced Bill 26, a massive budget bill that contained approximately 45 to 47 changes to acts of the Ontario Legislature—much too massive—and a bill that they wanted to bring in very quickly and pass without much consultation with the electorate. I was opposed to that. It was called the bully bill by some people who are more objective observers than I. I think it is, nevertheless, an indication of the early style of the government, which I hope will change.

Now, you might say, why would I hope the government would change, because won't it become more acceptable to the people of this province? I'm here in this Legislature to encourage governments to be moderate, to be conciliatory, to be forgiving in some cases, and of

course to provide appropriate leadership. I hope sometimes they will accept that counsel and advice, even if it makes the government more acceptable to the general population.

I think most people in this province are moderate and fairminded, and they're looking to the government to make changes in that light. There are those who give advice to premiers and to governments. They often aren't the elected people; they're other people who give advice. They say today, and it's true politically, that if you give a tough-guy image out there, you say "Let's have a Premier who shows he's prepared to stand up to all"—as they would call them—"the vested interests," that somehow politically will resonate well with the population. I suspect, if you look at polling—and heaven knows the government that was never going to do polling is polling again with taxpayers' money—that it will give at least in the short term a good image of the government. I don't think, however, it provides good government and I don't think in the long run it's good for democracy in the province.

I mentioned earlier I don't think the Premier has been particularly helpful. I don't want to get into a personal attack on Mr Harris. I have, as I say, many disagreements with him, but I just don't think some of the comments he's made in, as they call them, the scrums where the news media meet him in the hallway have been helpful in healing some of the wounds that are out there. I suspect some in the Conservative caucus attended that Hamilton rally and were impressed with the number of people who were in the streets of Hamilton. I know there's a feeling that somehow you think they're vested interests, they're rabid people, they're extreme people, and among the crowd there are going to be some of those people. But they were a pretty good cross-section. I know people who went there who don't go to political rallies, who aren't involved politically, who don't get involved in demonstrations, and probably are annoyed when they watch other people in certain demonstrations. These people had strong feelings—in education, for instance, of the impact that this government could have on classroom education.

I know there's a suggestion that all you have to do is cut out administration. Let me tell you, under the NDP, which was constraining budgets considerably, a lot of those changes were already made by the boards of education. A lot of the fat that you thought was there was cut out. There are far fewer administrators, far fewer people in boards of education who aren't in direct contact with students, and yet I hear the Minister of Education, Mr Snobelen, say he's going to cut \$400 million this year and \$1 billion next year out of the education system. You can't do that today and not have an impact on the education system, on the students in that system.

1630

When you look at the figures, when you look at numbers out there, it doesn't mean too much. But when it's your brother, your aunt, your next-door neighbour, your son, your wife, your husband who happens to be laid off, who happens to lose their job, the meaning starts to come home to people, because they have provided that

service to students in the classroom and because they are people who spend money in the community.

Again, the government and everybody understands. If you talk to the representatives of teachers' federations or OPSEU or anybody else, they all understand that the revenues aren't there today and that we must address some of the problems of accumulated debt. They understand that, and they are the people you can consult to advise you on how you can reduce those expenditures in a humane way and in a way which is least likely to affect the children in the classroom.

I look at what I think is an unwise abandonment of junior kindergarten. I mentioned once before in the House that years ago if you had asked me about junior kindergarten and its importance, I would have said it didn't rank that highly. I have seen evidence presented by neutral people—these aren't people with a vested interest. Fraser Mustard is a name that comes to mind. He went to Brock University one day—he used to be the president, I believe, of McMaster University and, previous to that, the dean of medicine—and he made an excellent presentation: study after study showing the difference between the group of children who had junior kindergarten and those who didn't in terms of their long-term success. Pretty convincing information provided by a pretty neutral person. Excellent, by the way, the talk he provided at Brock University, a university which provides opportunities for various people with some repute to speak on issues.

The abolishing of grade 13: I've always felt grade 13 was helpful to our students. I know that about three different governments have abolished it or said they were going to abolish it, but there is a feeling out there among many people that our students have gone on to university and community college—particularly university, because grade 13 was geared to that—better prepared, in a more mature state than otherwise might be the case. I lament the loss of that year to our students.

In particular I lament the loss of services to children with special needs. You know, we aren't the society we were when I taught school many, many years ago. The number of children who came from dysfunctional homes, if I can use that term, homes where there are problems within the home setting, is far, far higher today than it was a generation ago. That means that the students need that additional help which is available within the school system. I see when you withdraw those funds that there is going to be a problem.

I see one of the panaceas that's advanced is amalgamation of boards. Well, look at regional government in many areas. Tell me how much money that saved when you imposed regional government. It didn't save a heck of a lot of money. I think you have to look at it on a board-by-board basis, not simply apply one rule for the whole province. It may make sense in some areas.

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): I'm just going by what John Sweeney said.

Mr Bradley: The previous Minister of Education was a fan of this, I think. He may not be today, now that he's in opposition, but he was a fan of it once, just as he was a fan of the college of teachers. Indeed, there may be people in the Liberal caucus who may even be fans of the

college of teachers. Heaven knows why, but there may be. I have consistently been opposed to that on a personal basis because I think that's an unnecessary expenditure. I believe there are other ways of handling that problem. I think the bill that you people have brought in is draconian—

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): You just take some stuff away from the unions.

Mr Bradley: We are people who have views that we are allowed to express on our own, just as you have, just as the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, I know, is a strong advocate of the retention of the Niagara Escarpment Commission to protect the escarpment. I have commended him on many occasions in this House and will do so publicly, along with the member for Dufferin-Peel, who is as well. I know there are other members who don't share that view within the governing caucus, but I do.

Mr Chudleigh even may be opposed to that view, but that's why I like the opportunity in this House, within the confines of the concurrences, to be able to discuss these matters.

Mr Cooke: Is there anything else you want to split the caucus on?

Mr Bradley: I don't want to direct my remarks to the former NDP government, which many had thought had moved so drastically to the right.

The Acting Speaker: Please direct your comments to the Chair.

Mr Bradley: I know the person in the chair particularly, the member for Riverdale, doesn't want me to dwell on the former NDP government, so I won't do so, just because of her suggestion.

We have the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations here, and I know this has something to do with education. It's educating people about the LCBO. I want to commend the Progressive Conservative government of years gone by and the Progressive Conservative Party on establishing the Liquor Control Board of Ontario and the present chair of that, Mr Andy Brandt, former leader of the Conservative Party, appointed by the New Democratic Party, supported by all parties in the House, who has modernized the LCBO, effectively brought it into the 1990s in an enviable fashion.

I cannot believe that anyone in that government now would want to, as they say, privatize the LCBO, except the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. I would bet there are other people in the cabinet who would disagree.

The attraction is, all the Tories will be lining up for the stores. They'll be saying, "Oh, this is great. Let's get all these Tory supporters. Where can we get these stores?" as they did in Alberta. You've got a good thing going. You have a fine selection in there, I'm told, in the Liquor Control Board stores, a fine selection of beverages available to the general population. I can say that the stores are well located now. There's one located, frankly, not all that far from my house, I'm told, and a wonderful staff in there who serve the public well, according to my neighbours.

I can't see why the government, which has wonderful control for those children who used to be able to buy places—there's good control in the LCBO; very few robberies take place. Just across the border, in New York State, they seem to have robberies three times a week at those stores. I know that the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations would not want to see that happen, so I urge the members of the Conservative caucus to maintain that tradition, to conserve that which is good, and that is the LCBO, its employees serving us in a fine fashion in the 1990s.

There are other things that can happen in that regard. I want to go to the tax cut, because that affects all of these concurrences and why we have the situation we have today. When I speak to people about the tax cut, originally people said: "This is a great idea, this 30% cut in the provincial income tax. I'd like to see that."

But then when you explain to them the reason they're losing as many services as they are so quickly and in such quantity, the reason that the municipal governments are forced to raise the property tax, the most regressive tax, or user fees, again which do not take into account a person's ability to pay—when you explain that to them, they say that it's not such an attractive proposal. "If my neighbour's losing a job as a result, if the developmentally disabled will lose their sheltered workshop, as they are in St Catharines, as a result, if there isn't help for the most vulnerable in our society as a result, I would prefer to see the government keep and use effectively those funds."

There's a second group of people who are attracted to the argument that I am now making, and others in the province, about the tax cut; I'm sure there are many in the government caucus who are as well. That is this: When I ask people, "Is the deficit a problem?" particularly when I go to the chamber of commerce, they say: "Yes, it is. We must address the problem of the deficit." Then I ask them, "Do you know that the government is going to have to borrow over \$20 billion"—what's that, \$14 million a day it's going to cost the province?—"that we're going to have to spend over \$5 billion in interest to give money to me and to others in terms of a tax cut?" They say, "That might make some sense if the budget were balanced." If we had achieved that situation with the deficit where we no longer had a deficit, that might make some sense. Or if you were to have a small tax decrease that just gave us an indication that perhaps you are going to stimulate the economy a bit, that may make some sense. But they can't figure out why this government is embarking upon this.

1640

When I asked different groups who came before the Bill 26 committee about this, I couldn't find anybody who was in favour of it, except a former Tory candidate who was appearing in the Niagara Peninsula who said he was in favour of it. I asked a doctor, who is a well-paid individual no doubt, earned every penny of it, worked hard. I said, "Do you understand this about the tax break?" He said, "I don't know anybody who's in favour of it." I found a lot of people in that category who, when you explain the situation, say, "Well, under those circumstances, I would prefer the government address the deficit

and debt problem and I would prefer that the government not cut back so drastically and that we not proceed with this and we will forgive the government if it doesn't proceed with the tax cut."

I can assure you, if you don't proceed with it, I will not criticize the government for having broken a promise and I will certainly get up in this House and compliment the government on taking what I think would be a commonsense approach to a problem.

That is why we are in a situation with a strike by OPSEU, for instance; that is why we are cutting services so drastically in our province, because we are being driven by this tax cut that even some strong Conservative supporters are having doubts about now.

There is an economic model that is taken that economists accept. I was talking to a Conservative economist, Dr Joseph Kushner, of Brock University, who fashions himself as a real Conservative, and he explained how when you combine drastic government cuts with a tax cut, that is, a cut in expenditures with a tax cut, the stimulative effect is minimal on the economy—very minimal. In fact, Dr Kushner, at St Catharines city council, moved a motion, which council endorsed, which in effect called on the government to abandon the provincial income tax cut. We're not talking about a small-l liberal, we're not talking about a socialist, we're talking about an individual who has consistently been on line with limiting government expenditures and with being fiscally conservative. When people such as this individual are putting forward these motions, you know the government should be rethinking its initiatives.

There's another area I find rather interesting and that's hospital spending. I can remember when the Liberal Party was in power, if the hospitals didn't get an 8% increase, the world would end. We would hear from the hospital boards and we would hear from the Tory members of the opposition—and I must say this for the benefit of the hundreds of thousands of people who are watching this program in the province. In fact, the Conservatives used to get up in the House and almost invariably demand more money for their communities, and I understood it.

Hon Mr Sterling: Now, Jim. I told governments not to spend money in my riding.

Mr Bradley: There may be exceptions to that. The member for Carleton says he is not one, but he had colleagues who would rise in the House and ask other governments to spend money—members of the Conservative caucus. Even the present Premier used to get up and ask questions which would imply there would have to be increased government expenditures to meet what he felt was necessary.

Well, I look in our area and I see pretty substantial cuts to hospital funding, even greater cuts than the NDP imposed when they were trying to address this problem—far more drastic in this case.

St Catharines General Hospital, reduction 7%. What was most interesting—and this is how well you've intimidated them—the Minister of Health came in and said, "If you people don't play ball, I'm going to put what money there is somewhere else and you people may face some difficult circumstances." There's a great intimidation factor. One member of the hospital board

said, and I found this amusing—mind you, I think he's a Tory—"Oh, it's only a 7% reduction. We thought we were getting an 11% reduction." The same person probably 10 years ago would have said: "Where is the huge increase? Aren't you miserly when you don't give it?"

Greater Niagara General Hospital, Hotel Dieu in St Catharines, Port Colborne General, West Lincoln Memorial in Grimsby, Douglas Memorial in Fort Erie, Niagara-on-the-Lake and the Shaver in St Catharines all received reductions in government spending from a government that said during the election campaign it wasn't going to cut health care spending.

If you were in a situation where there hadn't already been cuts—the NDP out of financial necessity, Mr Rae's government, had to impose restraints on the growth of expenditures. That was understood, and they got no quarrels except perhaps from the Liberals, but certainly didn't get any quarrel from the government in doing this. When they did that, a lot of the so-called fat or unnecessary expenditures had come out of the system. Today you're cutting to the bone. Today the front-line workers are losing their jobs, thousands upon thousands of them, and the consequence can be seen on patient care in our hospitals.

The staff there simply cannot handle all the responsibilities they have with the numbers that they have now. Members of the medical profession have found it necessary in many cases to move to the United States because they feel, particularly under Bill 26, that they are not being dealt with in a fair fashion.

When I hear the district health councils saying they can live with this—it'll be very instructive for any successive government, I must say, when they say they can live with the kind of cuts we're seeing. But I know they're doing it under a threat from this government. There's a theme of intimidation out there of various people: "Don't give us a hard time or we will come down harder on you than we do on others." I don't think that is healthy for all of us.

I always feel confined by the amount of time that's available, but I must say as well that I am concerned about the level of environmental vigilance we're seeing in this province. We have members bragging to people in the backwoods areas of the province, the non-urban areas of the province, the rural areas—

Mr Cooke: Rural Ontario is the backwoods?

Mr Bradley: No, that's not what I said. The backwoods is behind my house. Those people are hearing government members say, "The Niagara Escarpment Commission is gone." I hope the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations has enough clout in this government to save the Niagara Escarpment Commission and the whole Ministry of Environment and Energy.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I appreciate the opportunity to join in the debate on estimates. This is one of the few times we get an opportunity to stand back and talk about the impact of the government's agenda in all its various forms on the people of Ontario.

I personally would feel remiss if I didn't begin by talking about the relationship between the fiscal plan and

the budgetary goals of this government and the strike of the public sector that's happening in the province, and indeed the issue that happened yesterday, which has riveted, I would suggest without overstating it, possibly worldwide attention on what has happened outside this Legislature. And I might add, that's not the first time. A number of incidents in terms of violence have erupted outside the Legislature that have gripped this province, this nation and indeed people around the world, particularly when they look at Canada and Ontario as a model of democracy, of tolerance, of understanding, of progressiveness.

1650

It also sets up, Mr Speaker—I see we've had a change in the chair—a clear example of the kind of Ontario I grew up with and the kind of Ontario Mike Harris is creating, one that seems to pit worker against worker, have against have-not, and certainly pits this government against every vulnerable individual and every vulnerable group and institution in this province.

I can remember standing in my place when Bill 7 was introduced on October 4 of last year and heard the government plans to ram that piece of legislation through. They were still flushed with power at that time and all filled with themselves, and when they managed to pull that off, they thought to themselves: "This revolution's not going to be as difficult as we thought. We're going to be able to implement our agenda. All we need is a little bit of backbone. We've just got to make sure we don't cave in to the special interests and cave in to those who are against us."

We said at that time that you cannot do that to the people of Ontario. In particular, as it relates to labour relations, you cannot take away the rights workers have had for decades and offer no opportunity for debate. There was no public debate, no committee hearings—none whatsoever. For those who think Bill 26, the omnibus bill, was too quick, I suggest they hearken back to what happened with Bill 7. After an introduction on October 4, on Halloween, October 31, a mere few weeks later, that piece of legislation was rammed through this Legislature in one evening, and not one citizen had an opportunity to have a say.

What is so obscene about what took place there was not just the following through of their mandate, which was to revoke the provisions of Bill 40—which, by the way, were an amendment to the Ontario Labour Relations Act. The government's anti-worker Bill 7 completely replaced the entire Ontario Labour Relations Act. Imagine that. Imagine how that's going to look in the history books when children are taught that when this government took power one of its first moves was to unilaterally change and replace the Ontario Labour Relations Act in a matter of a few weeks, with no public consultation, no opportunity for input, and in doing so, went well beyond the mandate it ran on. And that takes me to the strike we have in our communities across Ontario right now with OPSEU.

This government did not say in the Common Sense Revolution that it was going to take away successorship rights from public sector workers. It's not in that book—not a word in there about that—and there was no dis-

cussion about that on the campaign trail. Yet in Bill 7, we found exactly that: Rights that public sector workers had had, just like their counterparts in the private sector, which had been in place for decades—in fact, it was a previous Tory government that put those rights in place, maintained by a Liberal government, maintained and enhanced by an NDP government—this government ripped away.

There's no other term for it. They literally ripped away the right to successorship privileges and rights. What does that mean in everyday terms? It means that in the private sector you still have the right, if your business or your enterprise is sold and you have a collective agreement, that the collective agreement, like any other asset or part of that corporation, goes to and with the sale to the new owner. It means that those workers have stability. It prevents anybody from playing games, so they can't just transfer on paper the ownership of that corporation and thereby get rid of the union and get rid of the wages and benefits and other protections in collective agreements.

But it also provides workers with some security. Quite frankly, most workers are not all that concerned about who owns the company as long as they manage it correctly, and managing it correctly means offering up fair wages and fair benefits and fair working conditions and safe working conditions. It says that when that sale takes place, the collective agreement goes with it and therefore all those struggles that have gone on in that workplace to get a decent collective agreement go with it. Even Tories recognize the fairness of that because they brought in that legislation, and it applied to both public and private sector.

In taking away successorship rights from public sector workers, this government was teeing up, along with its omnibus Bill 26, its desire to privatize operations of this government. They stand behind the argument that this is going to create better government. The fact of the matter is that what it's going to do is help them pay for their tax cut because they need to reduce expenditures by \$5 billion or \$6 billion to pay for that tax cut, and part of that will come from privatizing. One of the side benefits to the Mike Harris Tories is that they get to pick and choose which parts of the public service they're going to sell. Of course, we know from the Brian Mulroney experience that when Tories privatize what they do is they pick out the most profitable part of the public service and they hive that off and they sell that piece and, lo and behold, they usually sell it to their rich friends, and they go on to benefit from the most highly efficient parts of public service and leave behind whatever parts they don't figure they can make enough money on. That's the name of the game.

So it should come as no surprise to anyone that public sector workers are on the street right now fighting for their very survival because one of the key issues is: "Put successorship rights back in the collective agreement. You took them away from us in legislation. You didn't talk about it in the campaign. You didn't give us any opportunity to talk about it when you did it. By God, you're at least going to put that back in the collective agreement because we're entitled to that kind of protec-

tion, just like people who work for the private sector are entitled to that, and they're allowed to continue having those rights." What we have are not what the government would like to describe as greedy, selfish workers who just want more at the expense of the taxpayer. What we have is a lot of frightened, scared workers who don't know what the future is and who have had their future made that much insecure as a result of legislation this government brought in that it has no mandate to do.

As part of that process, they have picket lines. I've been on picket lines. I've led strikes. I've supported picket lines in strikes. This is not an issue of who's right or wrong in a general sense of strikes. This is about what is happening to hardworking people who work for the citizens of Ontario—and, in my opinion, do a damn fine job for the people of Ontario—who find themselves at the dirty end of the stick with regard to this government's plans to pay for that tax cut.

That's why yesterday, when there was violence on that picket line, when the police were brought in—and I've said this before and I'll continue to say it: I don't believe the police want to be there. I've talked to police officers and police leadership. They don't want to be brought in in labour disputes, because they don't see that as part of their main responsibility which is to make our streets safer. Certainly yesterday, making our streets safer had nothing to do with providing a clear access to let Tory MPPs rush through that picket line and ignore the requested 15-minute respect of the protocol. That's what this was all about, and people ought to realize that we're now hearing plans were made by this government to do everything that happened yesterday before it even took place. It was all planned out ahead of time.

All the strikers in the OPSEU dispute want is a decent, fair collective agreement, just like any other worker in the province of Ontario. I honestly believe that part of this government's agenda is to show their friends who want to take on the labour movement—that's not all of them, but there are those who do—this is to show those employers: "Look, we'll lead the way. We'll lead by example. We'll take on our union and we'll crush them and we'll bust them, and then you can feel safe and secure in knowing that the groundwork has been laid for you to go ahead and do the same thing to your workers and the unions that represent them."

1700

That's what this agenda is all about. Regardless of what the government says, that tax cut will benefit the very wealthy much more than it's going to benefit the average working person. In fact, two thirds of that tax cut will go to the top 10% of high-income earners in the province. Privatizing public service is a key part of this government paying for that transfer of wealth, transferring revenue to the province from those who are vulnerable and need it and benefit from public services to the obscenity of those who already have the lion's share of the wealth of this great province.

That's why we get so riled and upset when things like yesterday happen and when things like Bill 26 and Bill 7 are brought in and rammed through. That's why we react the way we do, because we know what the real agenda is,

and it has nothing to do with helping the average person in this province.

On health care, which is a critical issue in my riding right now, this government ran on a platform that said, "We will seal the envelope at \$17.4 billion." "Not one cent from health care," they said. Mike Harris echoed that from every corner of this province: "Not one cent from health care. Seal the envelope at \$17.4 billion." A lot of people believed the Tories at that time, because health care is a priority, arguably the top priority for the citizens of this province.

Once they got in power, what did they do? They cut \$2 billion over two years from health care, and when pushed in the House to be held accountable, they say—and listen to them carefully, Mr Speaker, and anybody who's watching now, listen to what the government's saying versus what you thought they were saying to you in the campaign. "Not one cent from health care, a sealed envelope at \$17.4 billion". Most of us assumed that meant health care stays at a minimum of \$17.4 billion during the course of the government. Oh, no. No. That's not what the government's doing.

Now what they're saying is: "Oh, we meant \$17.4 billion when we came in and when we go back to the people at the next election, it'll be back at \$17.4 billion. But in all those years in between, we're not breaking our promise if we slash and cut away at health care as long as it's back to \$17.4 billion at the end of our term."

They misled the people of Ontario on health care. As a result, they shifted all the work that's going on in communities—and mine has been hit extremely hard. We were in agreement, as we all are, that there needs to be restructuring, there needs to be the ability to make our health care system as efficient as possible. We need to shift from merely dealing with diseases to focusing on wellbeing and health promotion and many other principles of health care going into the next century.

But in order to meet their fiscal targets, they've gone to district health councils like mine in Hamilton-Wentworth and said—I understand it's not a direct order, but from what I gather, the district health council dare not argue against the government's suggestion, recommendation and urging to go from two years to plan this massive change in health care delivery to one year. They cut the time in half.

The result in my community of Hamilton has been a report from the task force that many health care professionals and experts are saying is flawed in its analysis, it's flawed in its conclusions, and it's bloody well flawed in recommending the closure of St Joseph's Hospital in the heart of downtown Hamilton.

While we have some differences in Hamilton about the task force report—and we'll deal with that locally—this government should not be let off the hook for playing a major role in forcing a process too quickly. And where have we heard that before: "Too much, too quickly"? It's the theme of this government. They take draconian action, slash and burn and cut, and then figure out what the implications are going to be later and hope they can deal with the problems.

Layoff notices have gone out to the staff at St Peter's Hospital in my riding. I've met with the families of

patients that are in there, with nurses, with support staff, and they're worried about the ability to provide the kind of health care that we need in St Peter's because it serves our seniors.

That's what's happening in Hamilton-Wentworth, and I'm sure there are other examples all across the province of this government's broken promise, hurting and damaging the health care system in each community, and yet this government said "not one cent."

I might add that my colleague, the Tory backbencher from Wentworth North, for those Tories across from me who are rolling their eyes and shaking their heads, happens to have already sent a letter to the district health council saying he disagrees also with the closure of St Joseph's Hospital. So if the Health minister thinks he's going to be off the hook in terms of making sure that all the dirty work is done locally in communities like Hamilton and others and he can keep his hands clean and say, "That was done somewhere else, that's a local decision," if he thinks that he's ever going to be able to stand behind that and not address the implications and impact of his health care cuts, then he's sorely wrong. I'm sure, and I would hope, that that's not the first Tory backbencher who stands up for our community and recognizes that a closure of St Joseph's Hospital—or for that matter any other hospital in our community—is not necessary and it's certainly detrimental to the health care of the people of Hamilton.

I read with interest that my colleague from Hamilton West, the MPP Lillian Ross, talked with great pride, it seems—from when I read the Hansard—that she was very proud of the fact that here government is now getting out of the non-profit housing business, that they've cancelled 400 non-profit projects. All that's talked about in the Hansard I can see is the dollars saved. Well, again, where are a lot of those dollars going? To that tax cut. To that tax cut that the wealthy are going to benefit from.

When are Tories going to start talking about the impact on the citizens of this province, the ones who aren't going to reap the huge windfall from that tax cut, the people who need a decent place to live and who have been helped by the kinds of housing policies ironically initiated in the early, early days by the Tories, maintained and improved by the Liberals, and again improved that much more by us?

No discussion of that. I guess it's supposed to be that either those people don't matter or they're going to have to tighten their belts and just understand we're in a difficult position. That's what is so upsetting, that the people who already have money are going to get more, and those who are already struggling to survive in our society are being cut further. It's not to deal with the debt and deficit in order to put our fiscal house in order, which is a worthy and honourable goal in my opinion, but rather it's to pay for that tax cut, \$5 billion to \$6 billion a year.

When is this government going to start talking about people and about children and about seniors? That's who's being hit and hurt by the kind of fiscal agenda that this government has, and we never hear them talk about that. Ministers just stand up on their hind legs and start spouting the mantra about \$1 million an hour. While

those are important figures that we need to address, in my opinion there's no need to do the kind of harm that is happening to the average citizen, particularly the vulnerable seniors, disabled, just to give a tax cut.

1710

Now we're hearing from economists, other money experts, people out in the field who have no real particular ties to this government or anybody else in this place, and what are they saying? "Hey, doesn't make any sense to us. If you really wanted to reduce the debt and deficit as a priority, why wouldn't you put that money that you're giving away in the tax cut, why not put that towards the debt if it's such a crisis?"

And that is why we're hearing in the media there's a big fight between the Minister of Finance and the Premier, because the Minister of Finance has the dollars in front of him. I was the parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance for two years in this province. I know what those kinds of reality checks are like, and I can imagine what kind of briefings the Finance minister's getting as we're seeing the economy perform at a lower level than was expected, and start to factor in the cost of this tax cut. Yet Mike Harris is saying: "We made a promise to our wealthy supporters and we're not going to back away from that. The Bible is the Common Sense Revolution. If it's in the Common Sense Revolution, it'll be done, whether it makes sense or not, and if it ain't in the Common Sense Revolution, we don't want to talk about it."

Well, Mr Speaker, you can see by the kinds of demonstrations that have been outside this Legislature. It's now becoming a tradition. We know when the Parliament of Ontario is going to open because there are a few thousand people beginning to gather in the morning and building to tens of thousands of people out in front of the Legislature. That's why there were 10,000 people who marched through the streets of London in one of the most cold, frigid days of the year, and that's why just a few weeks ago over 100,000 people protested in my community of Hamilton and marched through the downtown of Hamilton, and the message was, "Mike Harris, we are not going to take this kind of attack from you, and we will come together and we will fight you on this."

There are coalitions building, many coalitions building, because one thing this government has done is make sure that it hasn't forgotten anyone it's gone after. "We're bringing everybody together."

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): What?

Mr Christopherson: I see Mr Baird—I forget what riding he's from; help me out.

Mr Baird: Nepean.

Mr Christopherson: —holding up his hand to his ear. You see, that's the problem. You folks aren't listening.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The member for Sudbury East will come to order.

Mr Christopherson: You only listen to each other. I don't know what kind of pep rally you're getting in the caucus meeting, but at some point you're going to realize that won't mean a damn when you go out and knock on doors and try and get re-elected, because the people of Ontario are not going to support or re-elect individuals

who support an agenda that hurt seniors, hurt kids, hurt the disabled, so that you could give a tax cut to your wealthy friends, or that you sold off the liquor stores to your rich friends, or that you broke your promise on health care or your promise on education.

I ask those of you who are here for the first time, start thinking about what you would do if the election were held in two months. What would you be saying to the people on the doorstep? Let me assure you that the people of Ontario, while they gave you a mandate to govern, and I respect your democratic right to do that, also have the democratic right to say, "That's not what we thought we were getting." I believe that's true.

The Tory member for Hamilton West also seems to take great pride in saying that rent control is going to be eliminated, and I believe the quote in Hansard is, "Rent control is not working." Well, nothing is perfect, but I defy anybody to suggest that renters in this province believe that a Tory government, the Mike Harris government, changing rent control is in any way going to benefit renters in this province, because that's not their agenda, and that's certainly not the experience of the people of Ontario when they see what this government has done. Any change to rent control is meant to help the friends who own the buildings, with no regard for the people who live there. They don't give a damn, and they'll prove that with their legislation. I have no doubt.

I remember standing on Bill 7 saying that when you take away the rights from workers, as you've done, and when you take away the disallowing of scabs—in other words, when you made it legal again for scabs—there'd be violence on the picket line. You had it right in front of your nose, and there's more of that coming, and I equally stand here, with as much conviction, saying that when this government introduces rent control, that's the kiss of death for renters who believe that they're entitled to a fair and equitable rent control system. That's not what's going to happen.

It's going to be interesting, because given the proposed changes in the boundaries for the next election, there are going to be a whole lot of renters who are currently not in the member for Hamilton West's riding who may indeed be, and that will apply to a lot of other Tory backbenchers. Wait till you go talk to the renters, trying to defend the dismantling of a decent rent control system for renters in this province. Just wait till you have to go and do that.

I want to end by commenting on another critical issue in my community and every other. This government made a firm commitment on education. They said, and I'm paraphrasing, that they would do nothing that would affect classroom teaching, funding that affects the classroom itself. It'll all be just trimming around the edges. It'll be administrative savings. There'll be some amalgamations of certain things. That's how they're going to find all that money. Well, we know that they've announced \$1 billion in cuts; \$400 million of that alone is from the secondary school system. In Hamilton, we've had over 1,000 layoffs sent out.

There is no way that you can cut that kind of money. By the way, they're making the local school boards do the dirty work again. Remember the infamous toolbox

that was supposed to provide school boards with all the tools they needed so that they could deal with these kinds of cuts in an effective way? What a lot of baloney. Virtually every school board in the province of Ontario is saying: "The toolbox is empty. You've left us to do the dirty work, and that dirty work means taking away and damaging our education system." So you've broken another key promise.

What have you also done? In wrapping up, what this government is doing is slowly but surely taking away any hope that the average working person has in this province of a future where things will be better. Oh, they may be better for a few, particularly if you're already making big bucks, because you're going to do quite well by the system that the Tories are putting in place and by the Mike Harris Ontario. But when people look at what this means for their jobs, when people look at what this means for the health care system as they become older and become seniors, when we think about our kids and we think about the education system and look at the damage you're doing there, people begin to realize that Mike Harris doesn't really care about the average person in this province. He cares about an ideology; he cares about his little book, the Common Sense Revolution; and he cares about making sure that he can stand up and say, "I did what I said I would do." They've done more than that, as I've shown on Bill 7.

I think that people in the province of Ontario would expect and respect a government that takes into account what's going on around it. If they need to make adjustments, let them do it, but this blind adherence to the Common Sense Revolution is like a steamroller coming through the living room of every person in this province, wreaking all kinds of havoc and damage to people's current standard of living and certainly the future standard of living they can expect. Most importantly, it really makes us worry about what kind of Ontario will be there for our children. That will be the key to their undoing, because Ontarians will not stand by and let Mike Harris dismantle everything that is of value to Ontarians.

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): As a member of the legislative standing committee on estimates, I had an opportunity to discuss issues with the Minister of Education and Training, the Minister of Community and Social Services, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Health. I found the smaller confines of the committee room fostered a comfortable dialogue between members of the committee and the ministers who came to address the previous government's estimates. Questions, however, focused largely on the course the government is now taking within each ministry to improve the standard of living and the quality of life in Ontario.

1720

With respect to education, \$400 million is being taken out of elementary and secondary school budgets in the 1996-97 budget year. I will mention that we are also reducing the cost of our own public service and ministry staff. Hence, the OPSEU picket lines around this building, bolstered by NDP and Liberal members. My concern with respect to education is that administrators and superintendents may be prone to lay off classroom

education assistants, classroom teachers, before themselves or before finding savings within the system. In fact, we have already seen this type of irresponsible behaviour. This was pointed out just recently, where some boards have issued teacher layoffs before even attempting to investigate the finding of administrative savings.

In December 1995 Minister Snobelen advised the estimates committee of his respect for school boards, commenting that we can take comfort in the professionalism of the boards. Given what has occurred with irrational teacher layoff notices, clearly some boards are demonstrating lack of any reason in assessing their priorities for educating our children.

As the minister stated during the estimates committee, school boards can find savings outside the classroom. Reductions in cost can be reached through better logistics in transportation, reductions in cost perhaps through making teachers more productive, reductions in cost by applying more rigid maintenance schedules within schools.

The minister recognized that it's important that we have very good services particularly for young children, with specialists that are required in grades 1, 2 and 3, and possibly grade 4. These kinds of extra services must be preserved.

Fairness in funding our education system is a large issue for my riding and for many rural areas in the province. It was incumbent upon me to ask the minister to address the issue of property taxes and education funding. To this end, the minister has established a working group of trustees, teachers' unions and board staff to review the funding of education through property taxes. But what of parents and property owners? The review process would be incomplete without input from property owners, especially farmers in rural Ontario, who are footing most of the education bill through their property taxes. Property taxation was on the minister's mind and I was pleased to hear that should it be deemed that representation from certain segments—for example, farmers or rural property owners—is lacking, the minister will be open to receiving more ideas. I might add that Minister Snobelen did take the opportunity to visit my riding and I had a chance to hear some of these concerns at first hand.

Further to the estimates committee, with the changes that have taken place in our welfare system, I welcomed the opportunity to pose questions to Minister Tsubouchi. We know that welfare rates previously were 30% higher than in the other provinces. Benefits have been lowered to a level that's still 10% above the average of the other provinces. Since rates were reduced, my riding has seen an 11% decline in the welfare caseload.

With all the good intentions of the Ontario government to finally break the cycle of welfare dependency, new programs being developed to get people off welfare are still being hampered. Why is this? Because no program can compete with the allure of free cheques in the mail sent to otherwise normal, healthy people. We must come up with more compassionate solutions, solutions that encourage work and foster self-esteem, family reliance, and marriage, for that matter. Probably the most discrimi-

nated against in our society are fatherless children, and a very large percentage of these people have ended up on our welfare caseload. The reason is simple: welfare dependency.

Growing up on welfare does not do much to boost one's self-esteem. Children in such situations truly start their lives at a great and unfortunate disadvantage for future personal growth and success. Ontario Works is the government's plan to help create opportunity for welfare recipients and their children. The minister outlined objectives for workfare which are intended to help people out of the cycle of dependency. Once again, \$40 billion has been spent on earlier attempts by previous governments over the last 10 years without really having any results except passing out more cheques.

The minister recalled that Tony Silipo indicated that his solution for dealing with the welfare problem was to increase benefits by 18.5%. That was the NDP's solution to everything: Help the poor by giving them handouts. Such an ideology perpetuates poverty. Give a starving man a fish and he'll eat for a day; teach a man to fish and he'll eat for the rest of his life. The days of giving away fish are over. Government today is planning to help disadvantaged Ontarians keep their own cupboards stocked.

As the minister stated in committee, what we need to do right now is get into programs that will promote self-sufficiency, will promote people taking more responsibility for themselves and their families again. Clearly, this is going to be a direction we take with Ontario Works.

First of all, Ontario Works is going to be mandatory. Responsibility is being attached to collecting a cheque. What is so revolutionary about that? That means that all able-bodied recipients are required to participate in the mandatory workfare program and those who refuse will receive no benefits.

The private sector will play a key role in bringing back hope to people trapped on social assistance, hope that will last longer than government-planned make-work projects. Ontario Works and the public volunteer sector, municipalities, service groups, trade unions and other non-profit organizations will also identify potential placements, matching people with opportunities and skills. Ontario Works will be coordinated through a central registry of all recipients and a province-wide placement opportunity database. To break down barriers to work, a child care component will be essential to the success of welfare reform.

This is an investment in future dignity and independence. We are going to provide the opportunities to reduce the cost burden to taxpayers.

In my riding of Norfolk, there's a common body of opinion that nobody ever got rich on welfare. We cannot merely afford to toy with reform. Welfare is a hand up, not a handout. In the last 10 years, government has spent about \$40 billion; that's equal to 40% of the current provincial debt.

Even during the economic boom of the mid- to late 1980s, government added more people to welfare every year. In 1985, about 476,000 people were on the caseload. By 1995, the number of recipients had risen to 1.3

million people. That's to say that more than one person in 10 was receiving free money from taxpayers. Spending on welfare during that 10-year period increased 500%, from \$1.4 billion in 1985 to almost \$7 billion in 1995. Our benefit rates had also become the richest in the country, as much as 42% in some categories and on average 30% higher than the other nine provinces.

On October 1, 1995, our government reduced social assistance rates to a level that still remains 10% above the provincial average in this country. At the same time, benefits for seniors and people with disabilities were not reduced, as promised.

This may sound old-fashioned, but we must replace our failed welfare system with more compassionate solutions that encourage work and family reliance. However, new programs being developed to get people off welfare can still be hampered. Nobody has ever become rich on welfare, as I indicated. Clearly, work, and not the failed welfare schemes that are destroying both the dependent and those who support them with their taxes, is the ultimate answer. We must replace welfare with work.

Should we force people to work? Of course not. But should we, the taxpayer, be expected to keep paying? No. If people choose not to work, the flow of welfare cheques should be discontinued.

My concern is that government in the past has been creating, partly through welfare, a single-parent culture in some segments of our society, a culture that is based on government dependency. We have a system that seems to reward a state of dependency by providing cash and other rewards for a non-traditional family. Welfare creates disincentives to work and marriage. Do either one and the benefits stop. It's time to change the disincentives created by the system.

1730

On February 6, 1996, the Honourable Dave Tsubouchi, Minister of Community and Social Services, outlined his ministry's vision for welfare and other forms of social services. He started by identifying goals, envisioning a system of service which supports and invests in families and in communities, where adults are independent, a society where children are safe and where support is provided to people most in need.

This being said, he recognized that individuals, families and communities have the primary responsibility to provide for themselves. Social services should promote self-reliance. They should supplement, not replace, traditional supports in the family and community by setting clear expectations for results and by targeting resources to programs and services which have proven their effectiveness. In this way, the government can afford to provide for those most in need across Ontario with both fairness and sensitivity.

Although we have reduced the amount of welfare cheques, we gave people the opportunity to earn back the difference. Many clients can earn back that difference by working only six hours a week. After all, any job is a good job. A part-time job to earn back the difference may well help a welfare recipient eventually to achieve full-time work and free them from the cycle of dependency and, I might add, the need for government intrusion into their personal lives and into their finances.

Positive signs are already visible and the cycle is starting to slow. Last summer, my office received over 1,600 phone calls, the majority of which were welfare-related. Since that time, the number of welfare-related calls has declined somewhat, due at least in part to an 11% decline in the number of welfare cases in Haldimand-Norfolk. A similar decrease of 11% is being experienced all across Ontario, where we now have over 119,000 people who have left the system. This drop will translate into a savings to taxpayers of about \$1.3 billion on an annual basis.

All across the province, and in my riding of Norfolk, people are finding work without the help of government money. People are taking pride once again in their self-reliance.

With respect to the Ministry of Housing, there is very little choice available for builders to reduce their costs, which is at the centre of why there has been an affordable housing shortage in Ontario. The restrictive Ontario Building Code has priced housing production beyond what low-income Ontarians can afford to purchase or rent. I had the opportunity to question the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing about this problem with the Ontario Building Code, which I understand is up for review in 1997.

It's my view as well that government rules, regulations, red tape, are inhibiting not only builders but also landlords from building the kind of housing we need. We've been operating under close to 20 years of rent control. Over the past 20 years, the Ontario Building Code has been broadened extensively, especially since 1986, into areas beyond just ensuring the health and safety of occupants of the buildings or beyond ensuring that the construction is up to specifications.

As a former landlord for 12 years, I got out of the business. I could not possibly compete with an over-spending government determined to out-price the market for affordable housing. Some of these building code regulations have no local relevance in my riding of Norfolk. I felt I was subjected to regulations that maybe had relevance for high-rises in the city of Toronto as opposed to regulations that would have relevance for a rural riding such as Norfolk, made up primarily of small, privately owned, single-family dwellings.

For the minister's part, he confirmed, and I quote, "We plan to totally review the building code, and this will be welcome news for rural Ontario." The minister pointed out that the code has been expanded to a point where it's gone far beyond its original intent. What I'm finding in chatting with construction people and people in the building trades is that the draconian, ever-increasing rules and regulations are taking a lot of fun out of this business, takes the spirit out of it, and almost encourages a bit of cheating on the rules. Often builders are trying to get away with the barest minimum.

With respect to the Ministry of Transportation, trucking is very important in my riding, as in many rural ridings. In my riding, because of agricultural products, ice cream, steel that is hauled out of the riding, my office is in touch with most of the small trucking companies across the riding.

They, over the years, have set very high standards, although 10 years ago, I myself watched a wheel come off a truck. I tried to raise some key issues with Minister of Transportation Palladini. With respect to truck safety, I recognize that a recent announcement was made by the minister requiring training programs for operators to address their own brakes, and the committee also heard that 7% of fatal accidents are attributed to large, heavy trucks and tractor-trailers.

Notwithstanding the numerous safe operators of trucks, public concerns are very high about the potential dangers posed by unsafe trucks and irresponsible drivers. While we have safety records of Ontario trucks, I asked the minister for statistics on US trucks. Rudi Wycliffe, acting assistant deputy minister, safety and regulation division, responded to my question.

Once a year, the Ministry of Transportation conducts a major safety blitz, in conjunction with other jurisdictions across North America. All the provinces, all the states of the United States who have jurisdiction for on-highway truck safety enforcement are involved in what's referred to as Road Check, the safety blitz I referred to.

I was advised that Ontario trucks performed no better or no worse than trucks from other provinces and other states. In 1995, during a three-day Road Check period, the Ministry of Transportation inspected 2,366 trucks; 43.2% were taken out of service. Of those 2,366 trucks, 42% were deemed to be defective in having an out-of-service rate not applicable to standards. There were 348 trucks from the United States; the out-of-service rate there was 45.4%. Quebec was the next-largest jurisdiction: 188 trucks inspected; the out-of-service rate was 49.5%.

There's another bone of contention in my area. Many US trucks come through operating on US-purchased fuel, and many of these trucks don't even stop in Ontario. I mentioned my concern for provincial Highway 3 during estimates. It was the third provincial highway, hence the number, to be built in Ontario, and at the time it was built, in the 1920s, it was a link between New York and Michigan. I understand that many US rigs can be outfitted with extra tanks for diesel. They can carry, as I understand, up to 900 gallons of diesel. They can spend all week driving around Ontario and not be required to refuel.

It begs certain questions. To what extent are US carriers basically getting a free ride in Ontario and are getting off the hook as far as certain taxes or fees are concerned? They're obviously not paying turnpike fees when they're in Ontario, because we don't have any yet. To what extent are our roads being deteriorated by these tractor-trailers without compensation, and to what extent are we in an unenviable position of our truckers trying to compete with that industry?

I mentioned the main corridor through my riding, provincial Highway 3. I've received many, many access requests for Highway 3. The problem remains that over the last 21 years this highway, because of traffic, has been labelled "controlled access" to ensure the public is not put at risk. It has caused problems over the years for farmers and business people who understandably have very little interest in the Buffalo-Detroit requirements,

other than, say, some of the tourist-based operations. They want to run agribusiness on this highway; for example, they want second laneways on farm properties, or fruit and vegetable stands. Many of these rules and regulations may not fit in some areas. They are inhibiting real estate transactions and inhibiting business and job creation.

1740

Assistant Deputy Minister Vervoort advised that the purpose of corridor control activities is to protect the safety of the travelling public and, secondly, the integrity of the highway system in terms of the provincial role being through traffic and municipal roads being primarily for access to adjacent lands. Those two systems play different fundamental roles in our transportation system.

I trust the Ministry of Transportation will continue to keep an eye on provincial Highway 3. As the riding grows and business investments come in, the area may well seem more attractive for access to and from Michigan and New York state. That attraction may put pressure on changes for Highway 3 sooner or later. Rest assured, I will continue to advise on issues pertaining to this highway.

I also welcome the opportunity to introduce for discussion the concept of the Ontario turnpike. This is a proposal for a toll road. This is a proposal that I believe is badly needed to act as a trade corridor across south-western Ontario. I would ask us all here to visualize. If you take a look at one of the North American maps that show all the turnpikes and toll roads and throughways, you'll see a couple of large gaps. There's a very large gap in Pennsylvania, for example, because of the mountains. If you're thinking of going from Michigan to New York on turnpikes, there's another large gap. That's Ontario.

The proposal that's been discussed, and it's been kicked around for many, many years, is the concept of what's been lately called the Ontario turnpike, essentially a US-style toll road. The most recent proposal I have seen would run this turnpike on the soon-to-be-abandoned CN railway line which runs north of Lake Erie. With an increasing move to just-in-time delivery, we are moving away from a system of rail transport to trucks.

I mentioned that the idea of toll roads is not new. This was first proposed in November 1938, in the era of Premier Mitch Hepburn.

It's projected that with this proposed turnpike as many as 20,000 jobs will be created during construction, and of course permanent jobs after that. Another perceived advantage is that it will take pressure off the existing 400 series, the QEW down through the Niagara fruit land.

According to Deputy Minister Davies, up until the early 1920s we did have toll roads in this province and much of the development on highways in this province in the latter part of the 19th century was financed by private capital. Highway 407 is our first modern-day experience with toll roads in this province.

Assistant Deputy Minister Guscott mentioned that the TransFocus 2021 study did look at the infrastructure needs for transportation in an area including Niagara, Brant, Hamilton-Wentworth and Haldimand-Norfolk. Extensive modelling around the QEW dilemma—its

limited scope on tender fruit land—was done. The ministry does not feel that the opportunities for widening the highway beyond its current plans are there. Therefore, we need to look at alternatives; perhaps alternatives like the Ontario turnpike. The ministry had discussed the turnpike proposal up to 1994 with interested parties, and I'll be renewing this issue for serious discussion.

Finally, I want to briefly touch on health, in particular the issue of physician services, which is very important in my riding. Ontario has more physicians than it needs; however, there is a problem with the distribution of those physicians across the province. Even though the supply of physicians has increased by 40% during the last 10 years, there is a serious shortage of medical services in many rural communities.

I had the opportunity to question the Minister of Health, Jim Wilson, on this issue. His response confirmed for me that the minister, himself from a rural riding, is committed to ensuring that each of us has access to an appropriate level of health care. I questioned Health Minister Wilson in the estimates committee about physician services in rural Ontario and asked that he immediately, for example, investigate a situation in Port Rowan, a small village in my riding that could be used as a case study for the rest of the province of Ontario. Port Rowan's medical needs and its application for an underserved designation is pending. The minister has personally vowed to follow up on this, "I will undertake to review your area as soon as possible."

The problem remains, however, to find a long-term solution. Financial incentives would only be a Band-Aid solution to a problem that is looming large across our province. For his part, the Minister of Health is committed to working with the medical community to finding lasting solutions to the distribution of physician services. Answers are long overdue.

I think many of us know the government is not considering telling your doctor where to practise. At this time, the Minister of Health has publicly stated that no area of the province will be designated overserved. He will wait to see if new incentives discussed with the Ontario Medical Association help to improve physician distribution—incentives such as special training for rural and northern medical practices. Should these initiatives fail, however, it will be possible to place a temporary moratorium on new family practices in overserved areas. Taxpayers' dollars should not have to support doctors in areas where there is an oversupply. Family practitioners could choose to practise in any other area, serving patients where they are needed.

Statistics provided to me by the Ministry of Health underscore the need for more physicians in my riding of Norfolk. The Council of Ontario Faculties of Medicine proposed in the mid-1980s that an acceptable doctor-to-patient ratio be one doctor for every 1,380 people. While the ratio has yet to be updated, it does provide a benchmark from which we can evaluate our level of physician service. The region of Haldimand-Norfolk has a doctor-patient ratio of 1 to 1,508. My neighbouring Oxford county has a doctor-patient ratio of 1 to 1,523.

If time permitted, I would also wish to discuss the issue of hospital funding and restructuring and its impact

on health care, and of course concerns for my riding. I have been meeting with many local health care providers and I can tell you there's no shortage of ideas on how to meet the health care needs in my riding. Again, on the estimates committee, and through the good graces of Minister Jim Wilson and his competent staff, there was also no shortage of ideas to deal with our significant health care issues in this province of Ontario.

I thank you for your time. If I had more time, I could carry on a bit longer.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): It's always a pleasure to speak so that the people at home might get at least some unfiltered view of some of the government actions of late, especially today that we're talking about estimates. We had the opportunity to have ministers on occasion step in and speak to the committee about estimates of the previous government and, at that time, give their commentary on what they would be prepared to be doing during their next year as they were leading their ministries, and how does it affect us and, in particular, me and my riding in Windsor and La Salle.

I'm always pleased to follow on the heels of any Conservative member so that, like Paul Harvey on that radio station, we can tell the rest of the story. We always tend to get only the half, and you never want to give the other half that actually gives the public the full information in order to make a decision on whether you indeed are a competent government or not.

1750

I'd like to start by talking about education, because what interested me most about the member for Norfolk was that he prefaced his remarks about how the Conservative members are the most interested in children, children in Ontario, and yet the very things that every ministry has done so far has been to neglect the children of Ontario. In fact, we started early on in September to say that Mike Harris has declared war on the children of Ontario, and we believe that's true.

If we look at the Ministry of Education and the kinds of changes that they are bringing to bear on parents and children in Ontario, what will the ultimate impact be? I think we'll see a worsening of the youth employment rate. Currently, the unemployment rate stands at between 25% and 30%. We are seeing very little activity in that way. Today, in March, we're looking forward to what kind of announcements might be coming, for example, in student employment, because those very students who are looking for jobs this summer are going to be paying even higher tuitions in their future and they're not going to have the jobs that they've had in the past. What kind of leadership role is this government playing to ensure that students are going to find employment?

Then the member for Norfolk went on to say that children's services were critical. Well, let's talk about what this government is going to offer for the children of Ontario. Is it those children who had already been enrolled in JK, who found out at the very last minute that they may or may not have that program? Or that we had all waited with baited breath for this introduction of the tool kit that was going to come from Minister Snobelen that would be the answer to the prayers for school boards to learn to deal with a \$400-million cut, that only being

the first, finding yet another \$600 million the following year, and making the announcement midway into their year so that they can only make those cuts this year based on a September-to-December calendar, not even allowing school boards to make the kind of planning decisions they have to make, not even recognizing how many teachers they can have available?

What we've seen across Ontario is huge numbers of teachers, in particular young teachers, those often the most energetic and full of vitality and ready to serve, received their pink slips, thousands of them across Ontario and likely more to come. The very thing this government was elected to do was not to cut classroom spending, and yet the kind of activity we see now is to lob a huge spending cut but say, "Oh, but it's not going to affect the classroom." Instead, apparently they're going—perhaps; we're not sure yet—by the definition by John Sweeney of what administration is. So let's talk about children's services as it relates to school boards.

That 47% that John Sweeney identified as spending cuts that are part of administration includes the student aides for children with disabilities to go forward in school and have the assistance if they need to do so. That administration also includes a psychometrist for children at risk and children who need intervention and special services in school. That also includes counselling programs so that the youth can make accurate decisions on what kind of future they may have in Ontario.

Those are the areas of children's service that are now on the block, and the tool kit, which every school board in Ontario has recognized is virtually empty, the school boards now are left to determine what those cuts are, and depending on where you live in Ontario will depend how the school board will implement the cut. Ontario's role as a government is to determine the level of education as a standard across Ontario, and this government is changing that. Depending on where you live, depending on how tax-rich that community may be, that will depend on what the school board will be able to afford.

Some may increase the mill rate so that parents and others with no children in the school system will pay a higher tax in order to offer the moneys available. They'll be paying higher tax, because they cannot choose which programs not to include, and yet the member who just spoke before me says that this government is determined to provide good services for children. In the words of a great fellow from La Salle, that's a bunch of crap.

I've got to tell you that we'll go further on the debate on education. I'm looking forward on Thursday to have a debate with the Minister of Labour in her home town of Waterloo. I look forward to having her stand and debate how the cuts in education are not going to affect the classroom, because indeed they will affect the classroom, and parents at home should recognize that is not what you were elected to do.

But there are a number of things that you were elected not to do, so let's talk about another one that influences my town particularly. The Minister of Health came down to Windsor last week and announced a capital expenditure for the hospital reconfiguration, and what did that mean? He announced \$48 million in capital required to close two hospitals, leave a remaining two, and what did

he forget to tell us? That the whole concept of the restructuring proposal to begin with, just like the other 60 across Ontario, is that moneys must be moved from hospitals to community-based services. But when the minister came to Windsor he forgot the other half of the equation. So what he announced was the capital expense, but he forgot to announce that we're supposed to have moves of health services to communities. Instead, when he was asked the question, are the savings from local hospitals going to be reinvested in their communities, there was a resounding no.

When the good people of Windsor got together to prepare that Win-Win report, it was on the basis of a restructuring concept that governments, regardless of party—previous Liberal, previous NDP, previous Conservative—all acknowledged, that restructuring was required on the basis that we must move services from hospitals to community-based. But again he stopped shy. Instead, when he was in Windsor he said too: "I don't know why

everyone's giving us such a hard time. We haven't cut a cent from health."

Let me tell you that the moment you were elected you announced a \$132 million cut right off the top. You announced another \$1.3 billion in cuts to hospitals in November for the economic statement. And yet this minister is on record as saying that "With every cut, we're going to reannounce other programs where we're going to move the services." I will tell you that every one of us here knows you have not announced that level of spending in health. You indeed have cut the health care budget.

Only in the interests of time and because I'm so looking forward to going on tomorrow with further debate on this, Mr Speaker, I'll finish for tonight and continue on, as we're getting close to 6 o'clock.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Being almost 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until tomorrow afternoon at 1:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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No. 44

N° 44

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 20 March 1996

Mercredi 20 mars 1996



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Honourable Allan K. McLean

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 20 March 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 20 mars 1996

*The House met at 1333.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

BUSINESS IN ONTARIO

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): This is a toonie I have in my hand. It represents the two sides of Mike Harris's Ontario.

On one side, we have the "Open for business" sign, which allows the government to continue collecting revenues during the strike.

Last Friday, my constituency office received a call from an employer in my riding who needed to make her employer health tax remittance that day but was not able to get through the picket lines. The Ministry of Finance advised that there is a list of many government offices open and available to take payments. The Finance ministry said the government was open for business. They said she must meet the Friday payment deadline, even if she had to push through a picket line to do so. Obviously, the government has made sure that workers are available to keep the money coming in.

On the other side of the coin, however, is a sign reading "Closed up tighter than a drum."

Today, I had a call from a constituent whose driver's licence was wrongly revoked because of a computer glitch. My constituent needs his licence for his job, yet the Transportation ministry tells us they cannot provide a temporary licence or issue a letter which would allow my constituent to drive until a regular licence was issued.

The government is blaming the strike, saying they can do nothing to assist my constituent, yet they are open for business when it comes to collecting revenues. Obviously, Mike Harris underestimated the level of public urgency of some of the services provided by the government—or maybe he just doesn't care.

SECURITY OF LEGISLATIVE PRECINCT

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I rise today to demand that this government immediately order a full public inquiry into the police violence against pickets last Monday. Only the members of this government think that nothing went wrong, but who are you listening to?

The president of the Metropolitan Toronto Police Association believed that the OPP acted improperly, and he said he was disgusted when he heard that the OPP were boasting that they'd "whack 'em and stack 'em" shortly before they clashed with demonstrators.

The public is shocked and outraged over photos and television coverage of police in riot gear beating up on

school teachers and civil servants. But still this government refuses to take responsibility for what happened.

This government seems to think that taking away people's rights and stripping workers of fair compensation is good government and that it's good for business. But are images of riot squads and billy clubs at the Ontario Legislature good for business? Is unprecedented labour unrest good for business?

The government has a responsibility to the people of Ontario to assure them that their police force is acting in the interests of the public.

I remind the Premier and the Solicitor General that they are ultimately responsible for the safety of not only the members of this House but of the people who were legally demonstrating outside this building. The public has a right to feel safe. Intimidating people from exercising their right to demonstrate is just another example of this government's arrogance.

I demand that this government listen to what people are saying. They must listen to the police and the public and have the courage to order a public inquiry of the police violence this past Monday.

GEORGETOWN AND DISTRICT MEMORIAL HOSPITAL

Mr Ted Chudleigh (Halton North): Halton North has long suffered from a lack of adequate chronic and long-term-care facilities. This being so, it is my pleasure on this day to rise and share good news on behalf of all residents of my riding and Halton region.

The Ministry of Health recently gave its approval for Georgetown and District Memorial Hospital to proceed with its chronic care relocation project. The \$1.3-million funding announcement will provide state-of-the-art delivery of this service. This is a much-needed facility and a good first step in addressing the high needs of the region in the health care sector. Funding for the chronic care project will also allow the hospital to pursue the development of a 57-bed long-term-care facility.

Ontarians deserve a sound, secure health care system. Despite the need to reduce the overall spending, we are committed to protecting our health care budget. This announcement reflects the government's commitment to find savings and efficiencies in some areas in order to reinvest and to meet the needs in others to provide new technologies and meet the needs of an aging population.

I am pleased by the minister's reinvestment announcement and thank him on behalf of those people who will benefit directly in the region as a result of this initiative.

Mr Speaker, perhaps you would allow me to suggest that I have a particular interest in hospitals today, as my daughter is in the process of delivering my fourth grandchild.

GOVERNMENT'S AGENDA

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): Over the last nine months, we have seen Mike Harris break a lot of campaign promises.

There was Mike Harris's promise not to cut health care. "Not one cent" is what he said. But what did he do? He cut \$1.5 billion, more than \$1.3 billion from our hospitals alone.

Mike Harris promised not to bring in user fees, yet what did he do? He brought in more than \$225 million in new user fees targeted to hurt Ontario's seniors and poor.

Mike Harris promised to protect law enforcement and classroom education. What did he do? He cut more than \$1 billion from school boards and municipalities which provide these important services.

Mike Harris has broken a lot of promises, but on Monday we saw not just another broken promise; we saw how Mike Harris's revolution is changing our province.

Just days before the election, Mike Harris promised Ontarians that under his premiership Ontario would be a kinder, gentler and fairer province. Clearly, nothing could be further from the truth. Through his actions, his smugness and his baiting, Harris has divided this province and he has encouraged confrontation.

Billy clubs and riot police do not make our province a kinder or gentler place, Mr Harris. This is not the province I grew up in. I am not proud of what we have become and this is not the kind of province that I want for my children, my grandchildren and yours.

1340

SECURITY OF LEGISLATIVE PRECINCT

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Part of our job is to represent the views of our constituents in this place, and I have had many calls in my office and many approaches from people in London Centre to talk about their view of what happened on Monday around this place. One senior who called described herself as absolutely horrified that she would see such a thing in her Ontario. A young person called describing it as a war zone and sounding very frightened.

In the London Free Press yesterday there were three accounts that were presented from union people. They were from Dave Kerr, who's the president of OPSEU Local 115 in St Thomas; Rudy Parachoniak, a member of OPSEU Local 108 in London; and Jeff Hale, a member of OPSEU Local 108 in London. All of them describe a situation in which they believe the response of the police was absolutely uncalled for.

One of the quotes is: "They smashed people out of the way. They were hitting people with night clubs, knocking them down." Another was hit by pepper spray. He said he had just picked up his picket when he heard a whistle signalling something was going to start to happen, and he had no way of getting out of the way. Another said he was hit by a billy club during the 1:10 incident. He said, "I was trying to hold some of the people back because I knew it was going to get nasty by the way the police came out."

Mr Speaker, please give us a public inquiry so that more of these stories can be told so the people of Ontario will—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The time has expired.

TASTE OF ONTARIO RECEPTION

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): It is with great pleasure and certainly with a breath of fresh air that I rise today to relay a message from the farm families of Ontario. On their behalf, I'd like to extend an invitation to all the members of this House to attend the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the Ontario Agricultural Commodity Council's Taste of Ontario reception. It will be held today from 4 pm to 7 pm in the legislative dining room.

I'd like to encourage all members to attend this unique opportunity to experience and taste the bounty of this great province and to meet many key leaders of Ontario's agricultural community. Let me end by reminding this House that in Ontario, there's no taste like home.

MEAT PROCESSING PLANTS
ABATTOIRS

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell): Je profite de l'occasion pour saluer les francophones de l'Ontario en cette Journée internationale de la francophonie.

Yesterday I left this chamber and went outside to speak with the meat processing plant owners and employees who were protesting in front of Queen's Park. Like the meat processing plant owners and employees of Prescott and Russell, they are angry because until February 19 of this year they were told by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs that meat inspection would continue with part-time inspectors during the strike.

They are also angry because they were advised only days before the strike started about the Ontario Labour Relations Board decision on the essential services agreement, even though the board's decision was taken on May 10, 1995.

Je voudrais apporter à l'attention du gouvernement que plus de 100 employés d'une dizaine d'abattoirs de Prescott et Russell sont présentement en chômage et que plusieurs de ces abattoirs, dont la majorité sont des entreprises familiales, ne pourront rouvrir leurs portes après la grève à cause de difficultés financières causées par l'inaction du gouvernement. De plus, pas moins de 2,000 employés et 300 abattoirs sont inactifs en Ontario et un nombre incalculable de producteurs et d'agriculteurs subissent des pertes financières importantes, encore une fois à cause de l'inaction du gouvernement dans ce dossier.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Time has expired.

SECURITY OF LEGISLATIVE PRECINCT

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): People in Welland-Thorold and across this province are sickened, disgusted, indeed frightened as a result of their having witnessed the excessive and brutal application of illegal force to members of Ontario's public who were peaceful—

ly and lawfully gathered around this Legislative Assembly and neighbouring buildings on Monday of this week past.

People in Ontario witnessed an unprovoked attack within the midst of little children. Among the victims were a school teacher and at least one Metro Toronto police officer. Indeed, as recently as today I've received telephone messages of Ontario Provincial Police officers from other parts of this province who condemn the conduct of Mike Harris's and Bob Runciman's goon squad outside this Legislative Assembly when they attacked law-abiding Ontarians, bloodied them, beat them, sent them to the hospital, knocked them to the ground, leaving them lying unconscious on the pavement.

I tell you, Speaker, as of Monday, this government has nothing to be proud of. This cries out for an independent public inquiry so that responsibility can rest at the feet of those who—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member's time has expired.

SUNRISE YOUTH GROUP

Mr Jim Flaherty (Durham Centre): I rise today to inform the members of this House about the tremendous work being done by a group of young people in Durham Centre riding.

They have founded and run a charitable, non-profit organization called Sunrise Youth Group. It's mission is to provide human support and friendship for people with special needs. I am proud to say that Sunrise Youth Group has to date reached out to over 900 physically challenged people through more than 1,000 voluntary participants in its many programs, such as residential camps, cabin retreat weekends, dances and athletic events.

Inspired by its philosophy of "Peer support, not paid support," Sunrise Youth Group strives to break down imaginary boundaries between differently abled individuals through real working models of inclusion within a shared experience of community and mutual responsibility for one another.

Generating a total of over 60,000 hours of unpaid volunteer work over the last three years, Sunrise Youth Group is supported by fund-raising, donations, program fees and funding from the Ministry of Community and Social Services. The group has decided that, beginning in April, it will become gradually independent of ministry funding through a mutually developed, innovative plan to obtain alternative funding to support its excellent services to people with special needs.

This keen initiative by Sunrise Youth Group is to be applauded by the Ministry of Community and Social Services as an exemplary model for other community service organizations to emulate.

SECURITY OF LEGISLATIVE PRECINCT

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The events of Monday, March 18, in and around the legislative precinct were extremely disturbing to me and should be to all members of this House. The actions on all sides that I viewed on the news and indeed outside my window have troubled me greatly.

If I might beg the indulgence of the House for a few moments, I would like to respond to security concerns raised yesterday, and I would ask that the members bear with me a few minutes since I find it necessary to first outline the sequence of events, make certain observations and conclude with my own recommendations. This makes for a rather lengthy statement.

On Monday, March 18, the member for Welland-Thorold (Mr Kormos) raised a point of privilege with respect to the actions of the police in and around the parliamentary precincts earlier in the day. Yesterday, the member for Windsor-Riverside (Mr Cooke) rose on a point of order on the same matter. The members for Durham West (Mrs Ecker); Sudbury (Mr Bartolucci); Algoma (Mr Wildman); Ottawa West (Mr Chiarelli); Etobicoke West (Mr Stockwell); Hamilton East (Mr Agostino); Welland-Thorold (Mr Kormos); Yorkview (Mr Sergio); Lake Nipigon (Mr Pouliot); and St Catharines (Mr Bradley) also spoke on the point raised.

Let me begin by clarifying the procedural issues. The issues raised with respect to the actions of the police on Monday cannot be considered to be points of order since those must deal with the procedure that is followed inside this chamber and in the legislative committees. Neither can I find that a *prima facie* case of privilege has been established. In his ruling of October 23, 1991, Speaker Warner summarized the intent of privilege as follows:

"Parliamentary privileges of members of the assembly...were intended to give members and others certain special rights and immunities considered essential for the operation of the assembly. These rights and immunities allow the assembly to meet and carry out its proper constitutional role. They also permit members to discharge their parliamentary responsibilities, and permit others properly involved in the parliamentary process to carry out their duties and responsibilities."

The actions of the police in and around the legislative precincts on Monday do not, by definition, constitute a breach of any collective or individual privilege. While it may be argued that the restriction or denial of access of the members of this House could be considered a contempt of Parliament, this is not precisely the issue we are dealing with today.

However, while a *prima facie* case of privilege has not been established, this does not end the matter.

1350

Many members will know that I have had a longstanding preoccupation with the security of the legislative precincts. I have on previous occasions shared these concerns with members of this House, and in an effort to resolve them, I requested that the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly conduct a security review. I have met with that committee, and I anticipate a report from it soon. It is my hope that we can set in place a permanent consultative process whereby the Speaker can seek advice and share information on security issues.

The security review and report of the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly will be of a great deal of assistance to me and to future Speakers. However, the committee has not yet completed its deliberations, and security decisions had to be made in anticipation of the attendance of significant numbers of demonstrators at the

legislative precincts on Monday. I believe that it would have been negligent not to have considered security arrangements in preparation for that. As a result, the usual steps were followed and precautions taken in accordance with the 1993 memorandum of understanding between the Ministry of the Solicitor General and the Legislative Assembly.

As the member for Ottawa West correctly indicated yesterday, under the terms of that memorandum of understanding, the Ministry of the Solicitor General may recommend that a special event or situation requires a greater than normal level of security and that a security plan is prepared by the legislative security service, that is to say, the Ontario Provincial Police. The plan is then reviewed by the Sergeant at Arms, after which it is presented to the Speaker. From the time the memorandum of understanding came into being, this has constituted "notice to the assembly." Assuming the Speaker is in agreement, the plan is signed by the Sergeant at Arms and released to the OPP and the Ontario Government Protective Service for implementation.

Since 1993, there have been approximately 15 such plans. In the case at hand, the plan was one prepared for the event of the strike as a whole by OPSEU and made reference to varying degrees of threat. In general, it can be said that the Sergeant at Arms and the Speaker are guided by the advice they receive from the OPP.

Before the signing of the 1993 memorandum of understanding, such plans were prepared. However, they were never discussed with either the Speaker or the Sergeant at Arms.

This procedure was followed in advance of Monday's demonstration. I am sure that the members will understand that this is not a document that should be distributed widely before an event takes place. However, it seems to me that if the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly were to create a security subcommittee or some other consultative body, the plan could be shared with them in advance of its being signed.

I have received a report from the legislative security service in response to concerns raised by the member for Welland-Thorold, the contents of which I will make available to the Legislative Assembly committee.

I would now like to briefly discuss the matter of the court order. Prior to the commencement of the strike action taken by the Ontario Public Service Employees Union, my primary concern was and continues to be that the members of this House and those staff necessary to its operation are assured access to these precincts. For that reason, acting on behalf of the members of this assembly, I sought legal advice and took steps to prepare an application for a court injunction. Let me be clear that it was never my intent to prevent lawful pickets from occurring on the grounds of the precincts. It was my intent, however, to ensure that the House would not be prevented from meeting.

In my opinion, on Monday, March 18, there were attempts to restrict, delay and in some cases obstruct access to this place. I found this sufficient cause to proceed with the application for an injunction. As has been reported in the press, the injunction was granted by

the Honourable Mr Justice Winkler. I intend to table a copy of that court order. The order reads as follows:

"This court orders that defendants, and any one having notice of this order, shall not impede, obstruct, restrict or delay free access or egress into or from the east door of the main Legislative Building and the north door of the Whitney building, of members of the provincial Parliament and essential staff of the Legislative Assembly."

I might add here that the decision of the court on this matter has made the issue of access to the legislative precincts a matter not just of privilege but of common law.

There was a suggestion made yesterday that I should have somehow delayed the commencement of the meeting of the House on Monday, pending the court decision. In response, I say firstly that the Speaker does not have the power to alter the commencement time of the House, even if the House leaders had first been consulted and had agreed. In addition, by delaying or preventing the House from meeting even for only a day would have been to do the very thing that I was trying to prevent. The members were here, necessary staff was here, there was no reason for the House not to proceed and to continue to meet regardless of the outcome of the court decision.

Several members indicated to me yesterday that they believe that a public inquiry should be ordered to investigate the police actions of Monday, March 18. I am certain that members know that the Speaker has no authority to order a public inquiry. A public inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act can only be ordered by the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

I find that the events of Monday were of such a grave nature that I as Speaker must take whatever action is in my authority. In this regard, in the strongest terms possible, I urge that the matters raised yesterday be fully investigated by this Legislature. I have heard arguments that suggest there are members who do not believe that a legislative committee is the appropriate legislative body for this matter. To them I would say that legislative committees are the means that we as legislators have at hand and the only means that I as Speaker have authority to consider.

I therefore urgently recommend that the House leaders meet and come to an agreement for an order of reference to be formally referred by motion of the House to a standing committee of this Legislature. I further recommend that such an order of reference allow for a full investigation, including public hearings—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Could I have some order in the House, please?

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Well, just shut her down, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: I'll do it.

I further recommend that such an order of reference allow for a full investigation, including public hearings and I am confident that the committee in question will ensure that they hear representation from all parties involved. In addition, since it is my belief that consideration of this issue cannot be delayed and will require some time to complete, I recommend that the House

leaders allow the committee additional time to meet over and above its regularly scheduled meeting times.

Finally, while it is absolutely within the authority of the House leaders to determine which committee should consider this matter, I would recommend that it be referred to the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly. My reasons for this are threefold: First, it has traditionally been the responsibility of this committee to consider matters of this nature and should continue to be. Second, the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly is less likely than some others to be interrupted by a referral of legislation. Third, and to my mind most importantly, this committee has already embarked on a general security review and this background would be helpful in its deliberations.

I want to reiterate that I find this issue to be of the utmost importance and urgency and I cannot convey strongly enough to the three House leaders my fervent wish that they meet immediately to draft an order of reference. That is my conclusion.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): Point of order, Mr Speaker.

The Speaker: The issue has been dealt with.

Mrs McLeod: Mr Speaker, it has not been dealt with. On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I find it difficult to believe that before I even get to state my point of order, you've decided that the issue I'm going to raise has been dealt with. You don't know the issue I'm about to raise. I'm not surprised that you suspect the issue I'm about to raise, because I do rise on a point of order related to the responsibilities of the Speaker and in fact, to the conduct of the assembly and to the appropriateness of a legislative committee investigating what can only be described as police action taken against citizens of this province.

1400

There are issues of security related to the members of the assembly and to the security of the assembly building itself, Mr Speaker, and I recognize your responsibility in addressing those issues. I also respect the fact that there has been a committee of this assembly that has been looking at security issues and will be continuing to look at security issues. But I submit to you that it is not only beyond your responsibility to order a separate and independent inquiry, but it is beyond your responsibility to suggest that that legislative assembly committee can deal with the issue, quite separate from the issue of access to this building of members, of police action against Ontario citizens. That can only be dealt with by an entirely independent, non-political, full public inquiry.

I am somewhat surprised that the Premier takes that particular moment at which we assign responsibility for the next actions to his government to leave the assembly.

I do accept the fact, and you will appreciate that I'm accepting the fact, of your statement that you as Speaker do not have responsibility to deal with the issue of a public inquiry. We will indeed be using our appropriate question period opportunity to challenge the government to order exactly that kind of public inquiry.

Mr Speaker, there is only one other issue of order that I would like to raise with you today, and that's the whole issue of dealing with the security plan. I don't wish to challenge you on it, because I simply don't know what

goes behind the development of a security plan, who is ultimately responsible for it, who is supposed to read it. I've heard you say that you did not read the plan. I'm not sure how that fits with your responsibility to provide for the security of the assembly building. I'm not sure how you can be accountable for that if you haven't read the plan to maintain security. I think that stands as an unanswered question.

I would like you to rule on whether or not that security plan can be tabled with this assembly so that we may have a fuller understanding of what the plans were and who in fact was responsible for putting the plans in place. At the very least, we'd like to know who drafted it and who did read it and who knew what security provisions were being made in the event of what was clearly an anticipated problem on Monday.

Mr Speaker, if it's not possible for the security plan to be tabled with the assembly, and I'll await your ruling on that, I would ask that at the very least that security plan be tabled with an independent public inquiry, which we trust the government will order following question period today.

The Speaker: I want to respond to the leader of the official opposition. If she had listened to my statement, my statement read, "Before the signing of the 1993 memorandum of understanding"—this is before 1993—"such plans were prepared, however, they were never discussed with either the Speaker or the Sergeant at Arms." That was before 1993; that's not the case now.

Mrs McLeod: Mr Speaker, I do stand to be corrected. Am I to understand then—

Interjections.

Mrs McLeod: I'm sorry; I realize that the government members are feeling very sensitive and very testy at any challenge on this issue, but, Mr Speaker, I simply want to ask of you, are you saying then to me that I misunderstood and that since this was post-1993 you did in fact read the security plan and know what was in it? Will you then further rule on my request to have that plan tabled?

The Speaker: On a further point of privilege, the member for Windsor-Riverside.

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): Mr Speaker, first of all, I do appreciate the difficult circumstance that you are in as Speaker. There are a couple of issues, though, that I am not clear on from your ruling.

First of all, you made no reference to the member for Sudbury's point of privilege. I find difficult that it is not a point of privilege. But I think that we are owed some kind of an explanation. When the Ontario Provincial Police riot unit, tactical unit—there was some other phrase used this morning on radio—is running up and down the hall banging their shields and enters an MPP's office, and a member comes to the House and says to you as Speaker that he and his staff were intimidated, did feel intimidated, I can't believe that it's possible to say there is no point of privilege. Those are the parliamentary precincts. This is our place, and that is the fundamental question of principle. So there's that that I would like to have an understanding on.

Mr Speaker, you've made reference to the security plan. I would like to ask you, I would like to have that plan tabled, not just to the Legislative Assembly commit-

tee. I would like to have the security plan not tabled just to the Legislative Assembly committee but tabled here today. I think part of the public scrutiny of this whole incident is making those documents available, as the report that you indicated would be tabled to the Legislative Assembly committee. I for one am not prepared to have this matter dealt with in a confidential way. It's going to be and has got to be dealt with in a public way, which means that report should be tabled in the assembly.

Mr Speaker, finally, I understand clearly that you do not—and I think in correspondence I sent to you today I understand that you do not—have the authority to call a public inquiry, and I think we recognized that yesterday. We ask that you voice, as the leader, as the Speaker of this place and a person who has clearly said that you have grave concerns about what happened on Monday, you could state clearly your view as Speaker about a public inquiry.

You will remember very clearly that there was an agreement back in September that there would be full hearings of the Legislative Assembly and that the government House leader at the time said, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, we can agree to a referral." We never got a referral by the three House leaders to the Legislative Assembly committee. There were never parameters for public hearings. There was never a public airing of what happened.

Our caucus is not prepared to accept or put faith in that process because it did not work in the throne speech riots. It did not respond to those very serious concerns.

And I am very concerned that because of the domination of government members on that committee, and the fact that there will be three political parties, of course, that the process will turn into a partisan bickering instead of the public airing of that incident on Monday. We want an arm's-length review that will look at not just the provincial police but everybody who was involved, and it's got to be done by somebody who has nothing to do with the assembly, somebody who can do an arm's-length, legal review of what happened.

Mr Speaker, while you have said today that you have grave concerns about what happened on Monday and that there has to be a public review, I think you would be most helpful if you would indicate whether you believe that a public inquiry would also be of assistance to resolving this, on your behalf, on behalf of all of us in this place, but more importantly, on behalf of the public that wants to know what went wrong on Monday.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Mr Speaker, I'll try to do it as briefly as possible this afternoon to find a resolution to this. I find it unfortunate that we are in this particular circumstance, but clearly you can see, and all of us can see, from the debate that's taken place in the last few days in this House, what would happen if this matter were to be dealt with by a legislative committee, that is, the matter of the police action against the citizens who were assembled near this building.

I have had experience with legislative committees. I know members mean well when they are there. All want to be as independent-minded as possible, but there's no question that partisan considerations, and I say that on all sides, come into the deliberations and the ultimate report which is written.

The other problem we have with legislative committees, and it is as a result of each election, is that legislative committees are structured so that the party with the most seats—in this case the governing party, and the majority party—has a majority on the committee, so the report that comes forward from the committee is going to be only a report with which government members can agree. Otherwise, we simply have a minority report.

1410

There are cases where legislative committees are appropriate for dealing with certain matters raised in this House, but it seems to me that this is one case where, for the sake of everyone concerned, the Solicitor General or the Attorney General or whoever would have responsibility in this case should call for an independent public inquiry aside from partisan considerations, a person of impeccable background who can hear all the representations which are made to that committee, all the evidence which is produced, and can come to certain conclusions and make certain recommendations.

I think those kinds of recommendations would be more easily accepted by all members of the House. They certainly, I believe, would be helpful to you, because the matter discussed, the focus of the matter on the police action against the citizens, is I believe unfairly placed on your back and should be placed within the purview of an independent person. I hope the Solicitor General or the Attorney General, whichever person may be responsible in this case, would give that consideration, would appoint that inquiry as soon as possible and we can resolve this matter I think to the satisfaction of all members of this House.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): With the greatest of respect, Mr Speaker, I listened to your ruling very carefully, and I understand the difficulty that has been alluded to by two of the previous speakers with regard to your position in this matter. However, as someone who has dedicated over two decades of my life to this place, I have, as you do, the greatest of respect for the legislative process, but I just do not believe, and our members do not believe, that in this particular situation the specific question that was raised, the main question that was raised yesterday—more than the police action itself, but the plans for security, specifically, who has authority, who made the decision, when the decision was made and why—the whole question of accountability cannot properly be dealt with in the context of the legislative committee.

The legislative committee should be tasked with the responsibility to deal with the implementation of security plans in this place and to advise you in that regard, but to inquire into the issue of the decision-making process that led to the melee outside this place the day before yesterday cannot be done unless it is done in such a way that it is seen to be independent and public in a way that the legislative committee and the legislative process would not make possible.

That is why we specifically requested your advice with regard to the possibility of the setting up of a public inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act. Hopefully, if such an inquiry were to take place and come forward with a report on what happened and recommendations on how

to avoid that in the future, that then could be referred to a legislative committee, which would then deal with how those recommendations, whatever they might be, could be implemented by all the members in this House to ensure the safety of the members of this House and, more particularly, the safety of the members of the public who should have access to this place.

I appreciate the seriousness with which you have looked at this matter, but I would reiterate that the proposal of a legislative committee hearing process, to be agreed to by the three parties in this place, does not deal with the accountability issue and the decision-making process with which we are most concerned beyond the whole question of security for this assembly.

I would hope you would consider whether you could make it clear whether those matters should be dealt within a public way under the Public Inquiries Act.

The Speaker: I want to make it very clear that the issue was raised the other day by one of the members—I'm not so sure, maybe it was the member for Windsor-Riverside—indicating that I had asked for an investigation, and he said it would be the police investigating the police. That's why today I wanted to make my statement, because I got the feeling it would have taken a period of time before I had received something from the police.

That's why today I've taken the initiative, I felt, to try to get some public hearings with regard to what happened. Anybody can come before that committee. It will be up to the legislative committee what they do.

I thank the members for their input.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): I too appreciate the challenge you face, but with all due respect I think your statement today is not as helpful as it could have been. I'll try and outline why I believe that.

You indicated in your remarks very clearly that you regard Monday's events as extremely grave. I'm paraphrasing, but I take from your remarks and the tone they were delivered in that it was a day of shame for all of us in Ontario. You then went on to say that you could not consider ordering a public inquiry because that was beyond your authority. That is up to the government to make that decision, so you're limited in your recommendations.

You cannot consider what we in our caucus, the Liberal caucus and the NDP caucus believe to be the appropriate route. That was outside of your jurisdiction. In my opinion, you recommended another route that you could recommend, perhaps the best route that you could recommend, but I think from the public's perception not the correct route.

The reason I say that your decision is not helpful is not because you didn't consider it well, but because you have recommended a course of action that is inappropriate in our opinion and one that I don't think will lead to a satisfactory decision for the public.

We saw yesterday in the Legislature at least two government members express their views about what happened, indicating that in their view the actions were appropriate and then sitting down to standing ovations by the government members, including the cabinet. Clearly, on our side we have a very strong, different view of many of the events of Monday.

The only course of action you're recommending leads to a legislative committee, where I think the public will simply find that the government has made up its mind. We in the opposition have an opinion, and rather than seeking the truth and finding the truth, we simply will find that the public is frustrated by the lack of that. Clearly, I understand why you've reached your decision, but in our opinion it is the wrong route.

The public, I think, has a right to a full public hearing on this matter. I call Monday a day of shame, and I think all of us would recognize that. The scenes that the public saw around this Legislature on Monday are totally unacceptable. They are scenes from other countries that we never dreamed we'd ever see here. Someone said if you turned the sound off on the television on Monday night, you would have believed you were seeing scenes from some other country with a situation that all of us would have deplored. But here it was, within yards of this Legislature.

For us, it is a matter of extreme importance. We can understand why you reached your decision, but you said in your closing remarks the matter is finished. With all due respect, I'm afraid it's not finished. In our opinion that is not the right route and in our opinion it is now up to the government to say the matter is so serious—and certainly if you're getting the same calls we're getting, the public is extremely worried. They are seeing a province divided like it's never been divided before, with the police organizations, for whatever reason, appearing to attack citizens who had no reason to be attacked.

It warrants a public hearing. The legislative committee is not the right route. We find it unfortunate that you've had to make that decision, but it's not one that we would find acceptable here in our caucus.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: On the response that you've given today, I wish to join with those in questioning the correctness of detailing that it ought to be a legislative committee.

I share the concern of others in terms of the difficult position that you're in, and also the fact that you've said you cannot yourself direct that there be a public inquiry, but you did feel very comfortable going into a great deal of detail about a legislative committee and the hours it ought to keep and the kind of work that it can do. So, clearly I would say to you with great respect, sir, that you then would also have the room to say that you think a public inquiry would be the appropriate vehicle in this case, if you did believe that. I'm assuming that for some reason you didn't reach that conclusion, although if I took all your arguments from the time you stood up, they would suggest to me that a public inquiry, particularly given the concern here in the opposition benches among both parties as well as the concerns in the public, would be a natural conclusion for you to reach.

1420

I think, Speaker, you need to hear from us, certainly in our party and from what I'm hearing in the Liberals' also, that the idea of sending this to a legislative committee is not a sufficient response by yourself or by the government or by this Parliament. The fact of the matter is that there are a number of officers of this place,

including yourself and the Sergeant at Arms, who are a part of that review. Certainly, the Solicitor General, the OPP and perhaps other ministers and members of the Premier's staff may indeed also be part of that.

Given the fact that every legislative committee has a majority of government members, I don't think it's reasonable for the public to believe that there will be a fair and balanced process. It will become a political circus. That's exactly what happens to things that get sent to legislative committees. By their very nature, that is what happens.

That is not to be criticized, but certainly I think that would lead us to believe that a legislative committee will not do what needs to be done, that is, to stand back and take a look at everything that happened before the event, during the event, all the participants, those I've mentioned as well as the strikers, any other public that was nearby as witnesses.

There are a number of players who need to be a part of that process, and the only way the public can be assured that it will be looked at fully without any political consideration is that this entire matter be handed to someone with a mandate to look at this thoroughly, at arm's length from the political process, someone who's respected and is highly regarded across the province. We've seen with a recent legal case that it can be achieved. Therefore, Speaker, you're going to, I believe, find a lot of resistance from us, a great deal of resistance to this just being sent off to a legislative committee and it starts churning through the political process.

I would also reiterate the request that the security plan be tabled today. It's there; there's no reason why it can't be, particularly given that we are still in the process of deciding whether it will be a legislative committee or a public inquiry. It sounds like something's going to happen; it's a question of what. That being the case—and we're still debating that now—let's put on the table what's already available, besides the news clippings and witness accounts that we've already heard. That means the plan.

I understand from the media that you may already have received some kind of report. It would be nice to have that shared. I'm a member of the security committee that you've spoken of and I travelled along with you across the province. If that's the place you want to start with it, fine, but that report ought to be here now for part of our deliberations, and again, a part of this is the privileges of the member for Sudbury and what happened outside his office and what happened in his office. All of these things point to the need for an independent public inquiry.

If it's done quickly, I think we can give the confidence to the public that this is being dealt with adequately. Without that, I suggest with great respect that you and the government run the risk of escalating this to a higher level. You're going to hear words of whitewash, cover-up; that's going to start to come out. We don't want that. That's not part of what we want.

Interjections.

Mr Christopherson: The government members are getting—see? That's what's happening, Speaker. That's what happens when this goes into a political arena. I urge

you to reconsider your suggestion to this place, recommend that it be a public inquiry done at arm's length, and then we don't need to go through the kind of political circus that will continue if you don't, Speaker.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I appreciate the comments that you've made here today and reported back to the members of the Legislative Assembly.

Mr Pouliot: I'm sure you do.

Hon Mr Eves: I think the member for Lake Nipigon should just listen to what I'm going to say before he starts criticizing it. That's always a wise policy.

Mr Pouliot: I know you too well.

Hon Mr Eves: Apparently not well enough.

Mr Speaker, I would say to you and to all members of the Legislative Assembly, as I said yesterday, I don't think that any member or any member of society can be particularly proud of the events that happened here on Monday, March 18. I certainly see no reason why all the events of that day should not come to light publicly. I think that the accountability and behaviour of all individuals concerned should be dealt with in as fair and open a process as possible.

I understand your suggestion and your recommendation with respect to the committee of the Legislative Assembly and I also understand, of course, that that committee, as indeed all committees do, has the power to summon people before it, subpoena persons and documentation and evidence. However, it sounds to me like the members of the opposition parties certainly would not be happy or pleased with such a look or an investigation, if you will, or a purview of the situation. If a public inquiry will make them happier, I think it should be pointed out that a public inquiry will cost significantly more money and probably will drag on for a significantly longer period of time.

Mr Christopherson: That's the solution.

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): What about people dying on the picket line?

The Speaker: Order.

Hon Mr Eves: Excuse me. Why do you have a tough time taking yes for an answer, I say to the member for Cochrane North? I don't understand that.

Mr Cooke: Ernie, you're being sarcastic.

Hon Mr Eves: Talking about being sarcastic, I say to the member for Windsor-Riverside, it doesn't do the entire situation any good to have him refer to the "throne speech riots." He knows full well there were no throne speech riots. I do recall some riots in Toronto. They were on Yonge Street. I'm trying to recall who was in government then. There were some demonstrations here on throne speech day, and it is everybody's political and democratic right to protest.

I guess I would understand, if they want to be political about it, the two opposition parties' concerns about majority committees, because I can recall a few majority committees that I've sat on, when their two parties were in government, investigating individual members of the Legislature. I can understand their concern, that they don't think this would be too appropriately and objectively dealt with.

So I say through you, Mr Speaker, to the members of the opposition and to the people of Ontario, the government has no problem with a public inquiry into this matter and I would be happy to discuss the matter with the other two House leaders tomorrow morning.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): As I'm sure all members are aware, today is the first day since our return to the House that we have experienced severe weather conditions in Ontario. I am sure all members would like to know for the benefit of their constituents and for themselves how the Ministry of Transportation has dealt with the situation.

As in all cases since the strike began, the ministry has focused its efforts and resources on public safety with the goal of maintaining a safe highway system for the travelling public. Prior to the strike, the government and OPSEU negotiated an essential services agreement for highway patrolling, snowplowing, sanding and salting to protect public safety.

Our position going into this negotiation was that 100% of our winter maintenance service should be deemed essential. The union had a different view and we negotiated a compromise. This means that plows and spreaders are called out when the conditions specified in the agreement are present. As members may be aware, we did go back to the table to ensure spreaders can get out where conditions can be expected to lead to ice.

1430

At one point, there were delays of as much as seven hours. We obtained an injunction to prevent OPSEU from delaying our equipment and workers. That means it is now against the law for picketers to delay our people and equipment.

Last night it began snowing across Ontario. The storm is expected to bring as much as 30 centimetres of snow. The ministry was prepared to react as quickly as needed to sand, salt and clear roads as conditions dictated. Unfortunately, the union was ready too—ready with picketers to delay necessary emergency equipment from leaving patrol yards.

I regret to have to report to the House that our managers have been faced with more delays at our patrol yards, preventing them from getting equipment out in a timely way and making it difficult for people to get to work. For example, at the Brock patrol yard in the GTA this morning, pickets prevented spreaders from leaving for one hour and 40 minutes. Spreading equipment and plows were delayed for more than 40 minutes at Elfrida, one hour at Beaver Dams, one hour at Strathroy and three hours at Burlington. At a patrol yard in the Chatham district today, nine OPSEU plow operators were called in to work. Not one responded. If it were not for the one contract plow that we had available, we would have had no plows on the road in that area.

I am aware that the union is at the Ontario Labour Relations Board today alleging the ministry has violated

the essential services agreement for winter highway maintenance. But I am happy to report that our managers have succeeded in getting most of our resources out on the road. I would like to commend our managers, the workers who are coming in and our contractors for their efforts in very difficult circumstances.

Safety of the travelling public is a priority for the government. An essential services agreement for winter highway maintenance was negotiated with the union prior to the strike, with the intent of protecting public safety. I want to remind Ontario's seven million drivers that throughout the strike they must remain vigilant in monitoring weather and driving conditions since highway maintenance is not at the full service levels the travelling public has come to expect. Avoid using the provincial highway system when the weather makes driving conditions poor. When trips cannot be cancelled, motorists should reduce speed, increase following distance and allow more time to arrive at their destination.

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I don't think the baiting and the continual whining by the minister and the finger-pointing are really going to make our roads safer in Ontario through this very difficult strike. I wonder whether the minister asked the whiz-kid advisers, who told him probably that this strike was going to be good for their popularity, whether this strike would have an impact on Ontarians and their safety. I'm sure the minister said, "This is probably going to be a great strike for Tory popularity," but he should have stopped to ask, "How is this strike going to affect real people?" We've seen that, and it is endangering the lives of people when the roads aren't plowed.

It's also somewhat hypocritical. This is the same minister who in October arbitrarily, behind closed doors, made massive cuts to winter road maintenance. He cut back on snowplowing, on sanding, on salting, behind closed doors, didn't tell anybody and hoped that nobody would notice. I guess he thought the same thing would happen with this strike. He thought somehow his political popularity, the party's political popularity could be advanced by basically holding the drivers of Ontario hostage to their political agenda. That's what is really at stake here.

If the minister and the government side were really interested in doing something about public safety on our roads, they would sit down and stop the finger-pointing, the baiting, the intimidation, and bargain, in good faith, a collective agreement that would end this political strike. This is a strike that hurts the people of Ontario, and the blame lies squarely at your feet, Minister. You're laughing about it and you think it's a big joke, and I think you should start to take it seriously. The people of Ontario don't want finger-pointing; they want you to be responsible for what you get paid for.

You've got the limo, Mr Minister. You have to make the decisions and you have to do your job. Blaming other people and passing the buck doesn't keep the roads safe. So stop baiting and urge your colleagues to end this strike. That's what you should be doing.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The advice that has been given by the member for Oakwood is very good advice to the minister. I was very surprised to see,

in the midst of very delicate negotiations—I understand there's a blackout now on what's happening behind the closed doors—very surprised to hear that the minister would get up in this House, when the negotiations are going on, to make a statement of that kind.

Whether the minister is factually correct or whether he holds these views, that's one thing, but using judgement in very difficult times—many of us spoke yesterday and the day before about the fact that the situation in Ontario is difficult because we have continued rubbing in the face of people who disagree with this government by members of this government.

The OPSEU people out on the picket lines obviously feel very strongly about their particular case. The government negotiators should be trying to come to an agreement, a good collective agreement, and this is not helped—considerably—by either the statements of the Premier that I've heard from time to time or the kind of statement the minister has made in the House today.

It will certainly make the job of the Chair of Management Board much more difficult when he has to have his people go back to the negotiating table knowing that once again you've got the kerosene can out, you've been spreading the gasoline, and you're about to strike the match and throw it.

That is not helpful to the negotiating process. We all hope a collective agreement can be reached as soon as possible. We hope that members of the government, in a moderate, conciliatory and consensus-building fashion, will try to reach that agreement, and the statement the minister has made today certainly does not contribute to a good atmosphere in those negotiations.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): An amazing example of competitive sameness with not much substance, Mr Minister. In fact, the minister is not announcing anything. He merely uses the rules, the provisions, under ministerial statements, to join a long list of apologists for the government.

Well, hear this, Mr Speaker. This is the same minister, the same person who, prior to the work stoppage, prior to the strike, deliberately, systematically cut \$6.9 million out of the winter standard program, the result of which was fewer patrol staff. People were pink-slipped, were told, "We don't need you any more to patrol our roads and highways." This is the same minister who deliberately made the use of salt rock and sanders less visible, because simply they weren't there. This is the same minister who said, "If you get caught during a snow-storm, use your cellular phone and call the OPP." The same minister wakes up one morning and says, "This is Canada"—and it's winter, Mr Speaker—sees himself under a state of siege, declares war. In war you attack. You attack the people at MTO. Oh, very good for morale. You grab a club. He's a fast learner.

1440

Before the work stoppage, during the work stoppage and, with this minister and this government, likely after the work stoppage, one would be hard-pressed to see the differences, for the budget at MTO when it comes to winter maintenance has been reduced significantly. So no wonder people are put at risk.

Let's talk about truck safety. Let's talk about the safety of motorists. I must say that the minister, when it comes

to the safety of motorists, has an immaculate record. He's done nothing for the lives and safety and peace of mind of seven million of us, women and men who possess the privilege of a licence in good—

Mr Chris Stockwell (Etobicoke West): Standing.

Mr Pouliot: —in good standing. Thank you.

In northwestern, northeastern, southeastern and southwestern Ontario—and not only by virtue of an agreement on essential services—many, many people went beyond the call of duty, almost took it upon themselves without being told, and said: "Look, safety is in jeopardy. I will declare myself an essential worker." They're not noticed. Instead, he looks in the mirror, turns around and blames men and women. As an employer, you're blaming your employees. The general is blaming the front-liners. How can you?

You met with your political staff, you dimmed the lights, you scared one another and you came out of the meeting with three heads so you could scare people. Look at yourself. Look at what you're doing to the morale of people instead of becoming an agent provocateur. There's still time to do it.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I just wanted to say to the minister simply this on the statement: He stands in this House and he says to us that the highways are in terrible shape, all because of the OPSEU strike. Minister, what happened prior to the OPSEU strike? The reality is, Highway 11 and Highway 101, driving up to Timmins, Kirkland Lake and Kapuskasing, have never been in the shape that we have seen them over the period of this winter. I, on one trip alone prior to the strike, counted 12 cars in the ditch, from North Bay up to Kirkland Lake. Highway 11 from Kirkland Lake all the way up to Timmins is nothing but a sheet of ice and has been for a two-month period. It's a sorry state of affairs when the minister tries to blame everything on OPSEU.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SECURITY OF LEGISLATIVE PRECINCT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): I think all of us on the opposition benches welcome what we think is a commitment on the part of the government, through the statement of the Minister of Finance, the Deputy Premier, that there will be a public inquiry.

I have to tell you, Mr Speaker, that I am extremely concerned, however, that in making that seeming commitment, the minister has also indicated he's doing that because the opposition parties have demanded it, because it's all that will satisfy the opposition parties. The minister shakes his head. Those are the minister's words.

I am concerned that the minister refers to the time lines, Mr Speaker, which you also referred to, and that that can become a reason for dragging this issue out until hopefully the immediacy of the issue is lost.

I'm concerned that the minister would see fit, as always, to express concern about the cost of what the opposition parties are demanding, as opposed to simply saying, "This is something which we in government believe is necessary regardless of cost, and that is, to investigate police actions against citizens."

I think it is absolutely essential that we determine the government's understanding of what happened on Monday and why indeed a full public inquiry is needed and why the issue is not all of the issues on the table, as the minister has suggested, but it is the issue of—not security of members; the assembly can deal with that—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Put your question, please.

Mrs McLeod: —it is an issue of police action against citizens.

My question indeed, Mr Speaker, will be to the Premier, because I want the Premier's understanding and his comments on what has happened over the last two days. Premier, you may be well aware that there are CBC reports that one of your senior advisers has in fact blamed officers of the Metropolitan Toronto Police for the violence that happened out here Monday. I need to know, Premier, whether or not you agree with your senior adviser and whether it is the position of the government of Ontario today that the Metro police, who were actually involved in stepping in and protecting picketers from the actions of the OPP riot squad, were the cause of Monday's violence.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think questions dealing with full public inquiry ought to be handled by the Deputy Premier and the House leader, who's handling this.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): I believe I also indicated when I was addressing the assembly a little earlier this afternoon that everybody, including we on this side of the House, wants a full public airing of the issues and the events of Monday. We also want to be able to look at the actions of everybody concerned on those days. We have no preconceived ideas of restrictions of any kind. As I indicated yesterday, we were waiting for the Speaker's report; we got that today. We don't have a problem with a full public inquiry and I indicated that I'm quite prepared to discuss it with the two House leaders tomorrow morning at our House leaders' meeting.

Mrs McLeod: My question was placed to the Premier because it was reportedly a senior member of his staff who made the statement that the Metro police were to blame for the violence. There are statements that have been made by senior members of this government, directly reported in the media, that do lay blame. Those statements need to be clarified or retracted in order to set the record straight before there can be a full public inquiry. That's an issue we need to pursue today, I say to the Deputy Premier, who has now been given the responsibility by his Premier to answer that. I take you back to the issue of a senior staff member in the Premier's office blaming the Metro police. I think that's a serious charge. You haven't denied it happened; I was expecting some retraction, some statement that you as a government do not believe that it was the Metro police who were to blame.

We'd like to also understand why for some reason the Metro police public order unit, which was standing by, was never called even though Wellesley Street was in its jurisdiction. But beyond that, I say to the Deputy Premier that this situation was so clearly mishandled that we've

even had shocking descriptions coming from Paul Walter, a spokesman for the Metro police, that they were disgusted by the actions of the riot squad. "Whack 'em and stack 'em" was the order that the riot squad was given. Yesterday the Solicitor General, your colleague responsible for the OPP, called their reactions a model of restraint. So I ask whether or not your government still describes an order to whack 'em and stack 'em as a model of restraint.

Hon Mr Eves: I'm certainly not going to comment on statements attributed to or alleged to have been made by members of anybody's staff; I'm sure everybody has an opinion. Surely exactly this type of information will come out during the course of the public inquiry that we've agreed to.

Mrs McLeod: Well then, Deputy Premier, let me attempt to clarify what your intention is with the public inquiry, because from everything that we have heard in the last two days, everything we've had reported in the media and everything we've heard from members of our caucus and members of their staff, what we saw in the behaviour of the OPP riot squad was not just a spontaneous overreaction. We know that members of the squad went charging into that crowd whipped up, that they had been doing drills. They not only had burst into the office of the member for Sudbury but they were in the hallways banging on their shields, banging on the walls and chanting in order to be whipped up before they charged into the crowd.

I ask the Deputy Premier whether he will agree that these are the issues that need to be dealt with in a public inquiry, that the issue for a public inquiry is not the question of security of members, which can be dealt with through a Legislative Assembly committee; the issue is the police behaviour in response to citizens on a legal picket line and the issue is who is responsible for that. Who ordered the OPP riot squads in? Who ordered them out into that crowd? Who gave them their instructions? Will that be the clear focus of an independent public inquiry?

1450

Hon Mr Eves: I believe I've indicated previously today, and I will do so again, that I believe that the actions and behaviour of all concerned on Monday will be the subject of the public inquiry, and whomever is charged with the responsibility of conducting that inquiry I'm sure will look into all of these matters.

The Speaker: New question, the leader of the official opposition.

Mrs McLeod: I find that a wholly unsatisfactory answer. I need some commitment from this government.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Mrs McLeod: We are not looking for a public inquiry in order to have the government be able to sweep all of the questions under the rug until hopefully the issue is forgotten or at least less in people's memories, and clearly that's the direction of the government in answering the questions today.

The Speaker: Who's your question to?

Mrs McLeod: My second question is to the Solicitor General, who has a direct responsibility for the Ontario

Provincial Police, because the issue that a public inquiry must address—and again I say, and you’ve said it yourself, Mr Speaker, a Legislative Assembly committee can review the issues of security of this precinct and of its members. The issue that we called for a public inquiry on was the behaviour of the riot squad of the Ontario Provincial Police.

Minister, I’ll say to you directly, you are quoted as saying that the actions of the OPP, in your view as the individual minister responsible for the OPP, were a model of restraint. I assume that since you’ve made that statement you’ve seen the slow-motion version of the CBC tape that showed an OPP riot officer, unprovoked, charging up to Mr Giles, blindsiding Mr Giles with the back of his shield—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I’m having a hard time to hear the member’s question.

Mrs McLeod: Clearly the members of the Conservative caucus did not listen to the press conference given by Mr Giles, who made it as clear as he possibly could that he abhors violence, that he was not provocative in any way, and that he does not understand why OPP riot police pushed him into a group of officers and then proceeded to hit him in the head.

I’m asking the Solicitor General whether he has seen the CFTO tape that depicts exactly the same scene, whether he has seen the tape of the riot squad practising charge drills in the halls of the Whitney Block, whether he’s asked the Metro police for copies of their tape, and whether, if he has seen all of that, he would now retract that statement he made that the OPP behaviour was a model of restraint—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister, **Hon Bob Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services):** I will give the Leader of the Opposition the benefit of the doubt and lay the responsibility for the question at the doorstep of a poor research staff, because I did not say that at all. This has been taken totally out of context. I commented on my own personal experience and said at the time that I have made no judgement whatsoever in terms of what happened in a broader context.

You’ve heard today that that whole question is being referred to a public inquiry, and apparently you’re having difficulty in coming up with additional questions to deal with this issue today because we’ve answered your concerns. As the House leader said earlier, you can’t take yes for an answer.

Mrs McLeod: No, I don’t fault this on faulty research. I in fact was in this House yesterday when I heard the Solicitor General respond to my questions with an assurance that he felt that the OPP officers were doing just exactly what it was that they were expected to do in the defence of citizens of this province. So I feel entirely justified in asking the Solicitor General whether he has now had time to see the evidence that the public of Ontario has now seen and is prepared to retract those statements.

I’m also aware, Solicitor General, that in this morning’s discussions, and this was a direct report, you indicated that you had seen the OPP tape and that you

would be prepared to release that. I think it’s important, Minister, that before there is any public inquiry, you make it absolutely clear that you see your position as Solicitor General as being one of carrying out a full, independent inquiry and not seeing your role as the defender of the Ontario Provincial Police. It would certainly not be sufficient to release the OPP tapes, because there’s considerable other evidence.

Will you ensure that this inquiry will have your commitment in looking fully into the behaviour and actions and excessive use of force of the OPP riot squad and that it will have access to all the available evidence?

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister.

Hon Mr Runciman: This is puzzling, to say the least, because the House leader for the government has indicated he’s going to meet with the House leaders of the two opposition parties tomorrow. They will discuss the terms of reference. This is going to be an independent public inquiry, and I’m sure it will deal with all of the questions raised.

As the House leader has indicated, we do not want any issue related to this incident—which no one is happy about—OPSEU is not happy about what happened on Monday, the police are certainly not happy about it, and we want to look at all elements surrounding what happened in the Queen’s Park precinct on Monday. That’s the answer to your question.

Mrs McLeod: If the Solicitor General is puzzled, I can tell him that I’m somewhat puzzled too. We’ve tried to establish the fact—quite frankly, I think the attempts of the government to put this issue under the table are very deliberate and only too clear to everybody in this House.

Mr Chris Stockwell (Etobicoke West): Come on. You ask for an inquiry, we give it to you and you say it’s under the table.

The Speaker: Order.

Mrs McLeod: I will try once more in my second supplementary to the minister to establish the fact that there are two separate issues, and I defer to your judgement in recognizing that there are two separate issues. There is an issue of security and access to the building, which legislators addressed, which can be addressed by the Legislative Assembly committee, which is an all-party committee.

There is a second issue, the issue which for us is the predominant issue, and that is the excessive use of force of the OPP riot squad against Ontario citizens. There is agreement on the part of the Speaker and the members of the opposition caucuses that that issue cannot be addressed by a legislative committee, that it can only be addressed by a public inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act, which you, Minister, or your colleagues are responsible for calling. This is not something which requires all-party agreement, although we’re happy to give you our input.

So I’m asking, will you agree, commit to a public inquiry that addresses all of these questions with all of the evidence, the public inquiry that the government only can order by order in council: who designed the security plan and approved the plan; what part the use of the OPP riot squad was in that plan; who decided to use the OPP squad instead of the Metro police unit; and whether this

public inquiry will answer the most important question, and that is, how could trained officers—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister.

Hon Mr Runciman: It's clear that our decision to support the request for a public inquiry has thrown a curve at the Liberal question period strategy which they can't come to grips with. We have agreed to everything, all the questions the leader is posing. I'm sure that the House leader on the government side of the House would have no difficulty with you attending the meeting tomorrow with the House leaders to discuss your concerns and have input into the final decision with respect to that matter.

Mrs McLeod: We are giving you our input. We are just asking for a commitment.

Hon Mr Runciman: We did. We've agreed. We agreed some time ago.

1500

The Speaker: New question, the member for Algoma.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): On behalf of our caucus, I would say that we're very pleased that the government House leader has agreed to the request of our caucus and the Liberal caucus for a full public inquiry, and we look forward to discussions around the terms of reference and the parameters of that inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act. We would hope that this will not be a long-drawn-out process but it will be full and public, and I will not go further than that. I think it's time for us to get back to the issue at hand, the substantive issue, and that is settling the strike and ensuring that we get the services that the people of the province require back in place.

The Speaker: Who is your question to?

JOB SECURITY

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I will pose a question to the Premier. This is following up on the exchange the Premier and I had in this place on Monday when I asked him a question regarding successor rights. At that time, you will recall, I asked the Premier why he chose to provoke a confrontation by stripping successor rights from Ontario government workers when those rights were enjoyed by everyone else in the private and public sectors in Ontario.

In response, the Premier gave a rather silly reaction that he thought I was proposing that we should deny those rights to the private sector workers who now continue to enjoy them in Ontario. The Premier also said that the government was not necessarily committed to privatization.

With that in mind, I would ask the Premier why it is that the government has taken the position that led it to legislate away those successor rights, which helped to precipitate this labour dispute, and if the government is not committed necessarily to privatization, then is he prepared in these negotiations to have the government restore those rights to the public sector workers and have them treated fairly and the same as all other workers in this province?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think the issue of negotiations would be best handled by the Chair of Management Board.

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): We've made it clear through these negotiations that we intend to be fair to our employees. However, we must also be fair to the taxpayers of the province of Ontario and we must be fair to those who need services not only today but five years from now, 10 years from now. So this government does need to restructure. This government does need to look at all methods of alternative delivery. Consequently, that's the reason we took the action on successor rights.

I will remind the leader of the third party that successor rights does not apply in the province of Newfoundland, the province of Prince Edward Island, the province of Nova Scotia, the province of New Brunswick, the province of Alberta, the federal government. Those governments understand that they have to restructure as well and deal with their individual situations.

Our individual situation is a \$100-billion debt, deficits of \$10 billion a year, and a need to deliver better services for less. As a result, we have taken this action to be able to restructure the province of Ontario, and that's the course that we've clearly set out.

Having said that, we have indicated that we would pursue reasonable efforts to assist the employees to go with the job if the job is privatized or divested or outsourced.

Mr Wildman: We are not here talking about Newfoundland or the Maritime provinces. We are talking about Ontario, the largest and most important economy in Canada. Why is it that this government has to equate itself and harmonize itself down to the lowest common denominator? Why is this government not prepared to lead in labour negotiations in this province? Why is this government not prepared to do as previous Conservative governments have done, and that is, in the area of labour relations in Canada, be seen as a progressive, leading province?

Is it not the case that this government is determined to sell off public sector services to their friends, and in doing so to sell off the jobs of the workers who are out on the picket lines today?

Hon David Johnson: I didn't quite catch the reference to Newfoundland. I hope the member didn't say that Newfoundland was the lowest. I'm sure we wouldn't—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order.

Hon David Johnson: I'm sure the member would withdraw that remark.

I'll tell you the reason. The reason is because between 1985 and 1990 spending got out of control in the provincial government. Between 1990 and 1995, we incurred \$10-billion deficits each and every year for five successive years. The total debt of the province of Ontario is now \$100 billion. That's the problem we face. That's the problem many of these other governments do not face. Many of the governments indeed have balanced the books. That's what we're trying to achieve. We're trying to achieve that by restructuring the government, by delivering better services to the people of the province of Ontario, doing it by exploring many different alternatives, including privatization, including outsourcing, including contracting out.

We are going to make our best efforts. We have committed to making best efforts to move the employees with the jobs, but we have to have the freedom, the flexibility to deliver the best possible services to the people of Ontario at the lowest cost, because of the spending and the deficits of the two previous governments.

Mr Wildman: The Chair of Management Board knows full well that what I was suggesting is that this government should be leading in labour relations in this country; it should not be following other provinces that may not enjoy the same rights we've come to enjoy in this province. The minister has to make clear, in responding to my question, why he continues the mantra of the cost that government is experiencing, the cost of the contract, when he knows full well that successor rights do not cost the taxpayers of this province one red cent. If the government wants a settlement and the government doesn't want to spend more money, why aren't you putting issues on the table that can in fact lead to a settlement that won't cost a great deal of money?

Hon David Johnson: I wish to assure the leader of the third party that in fact we are bargaining for a settlement. I think we have demonstrated that in terms of striking a tentative agreement with AMAPCEO, which I hope very much will be ratified today. I will say that the issues we've dealt with on AMAPCEO, the second-largest union of the province of Ontario, were those very issues, the job security issues, that are of concern to the leader of the third party.

We are a leader in labour relations. We have offered, through this contract, pension improvements. We have offered severance improvements. We have a pension plan for the members of the Ontario public service, a very generous defined, indexed pension plan for the members of the public service here in the province of Ontario that hardly any workers, probably less than 10% of the workers in Ontario, would have access to.

Now it's time for this province, in addition to our excellent labour relations history, to take leadership in terms of job creation, in terms of delivering job creation in the private sector, setting the table, balancing the books, doing better with less money through this government. Other governments are doing that. Even the federal government is attempting to do that. It's time that the province of Ontario took those actions.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question to the Minister of Education and Training. The minister will know that in the last number of days hundreds of teachers have been on the picket lines in solidarity with OPSEU members, the reason being that they know that after this government gets through cutting about 20,000 to 27,000 jobs, whatever the exact number is, the teachers are next. They also know that the government has made its promise, the Conservative Party's promise in the election campaign of last year not to cut classroom expenditures, a real sham by its actions, and they know that there are thousands of layoff notices that have already been given out and that are pending.

For example, the Peel Board of Education has issued 519 layoff notices; Halton Board of Education, layoffs of over 1,500; 950 layoffs in Simcoe county; over 1,000 layoffs in Hamilton-Wentworth; over 500 in Kitchener-Waterloo. That's over 4,500 in just five school boards in the province.

1510

You can't fool the public that you can make these kinds of layoffs and cuts and still not affect classroom education. Nobody in this province voted on June 8 for these kinds of layoffs of teachers and cuts in education. Can the minister explain to the House how these layoffs can be achieved by boards across the province and at the same time you can maintain the commitment not to adversely affect classroom education in Ontario?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I want to thank the leader of the third party for the question today. I believe that the people of Ontario voted on June 8 for less government spending, for smaller government, and for a return of the province to opportunity, possibility and vitality that will happen because this government takes on the very real challenges and problems that this province faces.

With regard to education, I think it's very clear, if you talk to your colleague from Windsor-Riverside, the Sweeney commission that he appointed reported, a matter of a few weeks ago, that some 47% of the almost \$14 billion that's spent in the province of Ontario on education is spent outside of the classroom. Mr Sweeney's commission suggested that that should be lowered to 40%, and that in fact would reflect a saving of \$1 billion.

That's the report that was commissioned by your government from a former member of the Liberal Party that sat in this House. I think that there's every indication that we can have a more affordable system, a more accountable system, and a higher-quality education system in this province.

Mr Wildman: The minister did not respond to the question. The question was on layoffs of teachers in this province and how you could continue with these kinds of layoffs and not adversely affect classroom education. This government is taking \$1 billion out of education in one year, and that is producing the situation where boards are laying off staff. How can you have 4,500 people laid off in just five school boards in this province, with more to come across the province, and not affect classroom education? We're not talking in this question about outside classroom education; teachers are in the classroom. How can you lay off those teachers and not affect classroom education?

Hon Mr Snobelen: Well, I think the honourable member knows that teachers are not the direct employees of the province, they are the employees of the boards of education, and I think that the leader of the third party has been—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order.

Hon Mr Snobelen: Perhaps the members opposite would like to hear this response. It might be edifying for them. Perhaps the leader of the third party—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Hon Mr Snobelen: —should talk to the school boards. Perhaps he should find out if having the teachers in the classroom is exactly what educators in this province want. They want teachers in the classroom making a difference with students. That's the direction that education is going in this province.

Mr Wildman: This is not acceptable and it's not just happening at the primary and secondary levels. Because of this government's actions with regard to funding at the post-secondary level, as well as the elementary and secondary levels, our community colleges in this province are in chaos. There have been about 2,300 jobs eliminated from community colleges across the province so far, as many as 1,100 part-time jobs have been eliminated in the community colleges as well, and there's more to come: 80 jobs at Canadore College in North Bay; 63 jobs at Georgian College in Barrie and Parry Sound; 200 jobs at George Brown College here in Toronto; 150 jobs at Mohawk College in Hamilton; 120 jobs at Algonquin College in Ottawa; 90 jobs at Confederation College in Thunder Bay. The colleges are saying that these layoffs are directly associated with the cuts that you have made in funding for post-secondary education.

How can you guarantee community college classroom education will not suffer in this province with these kinds of layoffs and program cancellations that are directly related to the funding cuts that you have announced?

Hon Mr Snobelen: It's a pleasure to give answer to that question. Let me reiterate. The report that was just recently released by the Sweeney commission indicates that 47% of our spending in education happens outside of the classroom in this province, and so this government can live up to its commitment not to affect classroom education and have a more affordable system.

As far as colleges are concerned, I think the honourable member knows we are committed to a discussion paper with the colleges and universities in this province, to make sure we have a rationalization of programs that work for the future of this province and for the future of the people of this province.

I believe the honourable member will know that colleges have recently announced the cancellation of some programs offered in the GTA. We now have five nursing programs offered in the GTA and perhaps there might be some room for rationalization of these publicly funded programs. We're encouraging that discussion, we're encouraging that dialogue, and we intend to make the college system in the province better.

TTC SAFETY

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): A question to the Minister of Transportation: As you know, you've been unequivocal in your support for the funding of the Sheppard subway, which is going to be a commitment of 75% of the \$1-billion cost.

The problem, though, is that you've been very silent as a result of the inquest into the horrible accident that occurred last August, the subway crash. That inquest, as you know, directed you to make funding of good repair and safety on the TTC the number one priority. Your silence on responding to that is putting, I think, the good

repair program into jeopardy and the Sheppard subway into jeopardy. Why are you not responding to that very specific directive from the jury, which said that the province must make safety and good repair a priority?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): We were concerned to hear about the safety issue, obviously, from the coroner's report. Metro and the TTC have an obligation to make sure their transit system is safe for Ontarians to use, for Torontonians to use.

We have a separate issue here from the Sheppard subway. It was a commitment that was made prior.

In terms of the additional funding the TTC is requesting, I want to say this: We are a funding partner; how they spend the money is basically up to them. We are in the position of coming up with our financial statement in the spring. The Minister of Finance is going to allot me the money that we're going to be using, and I will be able to give the TTC an answer on the funds they will be allocated.

Mr Colle: I don't know if the minister's read this specific recommendation of the jury. It says, "We recommend and emphasize the province of Ontario"—that's the minister—"and the municipality of Metropolitan Toronto recognize the first funding priority is the state of good repair." In other words, you have the responsibility. You do not, I hope, just sign the cheques. You are giving that money in partnership. You have control over where that money is spent and you are directed by the province to do something about the safety and the good repair. Why not say you're going to do what the jury is recommending and spend money on safety and good repair, so you don't jeopardize the Sheppard subway and the safety and good repair, as you're doing right now by not responding?

Hon Mr Palladini: We intend to review all the recommendations in detail and work with Metro to ensure the safety. Through its normal budget allocation process the ministry will consider the TTC's request. I don't have that number available to share with the member.

Mr Colle: It's not the TTC. It's the jury that's telling you to put money towards TTC safety.

Hon Mr Palladini: I think I have answered your question. We intend to review all the recommendations of the inquest, work with Metro, work with the TTC, that safety is going to be maintained as a priority. I've answered your question.

1520

AGRICULTURE PROGRAMS

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Premier. In a campaign document called Report of the Mike Harris Task Force on Rural Economic Development, you said, "Under a Mike Harris government agriculture will regain its fair share of government support." Then you say, "There are no cuts to agricultural programs in our policy plan the Common Sense Revolution."

In July, following the election, your Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs announced a cut to his ministry's budget of \$13 million, in November he announced a further cut of \$13.1 million and now he is

musings around the province about further reductions of 30% to 35% in the ministry budget. Premier, does this sound like a broken promise to you?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): No.

Mr Hampton: The Premier says that it doesn't sound like a broken promise to him. Premier, I want to read to you a letter. It's a letter from your own rural caucus advisory committee and rural MPPs. This is signed by, I believe, 13 of your rural caucus colleagues who are here. It says: "The OMAFRA budget was cut from \$590 million to \$450 million.... It is now proposed that we approve a further cut of \$156 million in 1996-97." Your colleagues, your members say, "Agriculture has had its fair share of cuts in the past." Then they refer to your promises and they say to you—you got a copy of it—"The rural caucus advisory committee agreed unanimously on February 14, 1996 that the government should honour the Premier's commitment in the Common Sense Revolution and its Rural Economic Development policy booklet that there be 'no cuts to the OMAFRA budget.'" They respectfully requested a discussion with you. Do you still insist that there is not a promise broken to the farmers of this province?

Hon Mr Harris: Yes.

MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGER

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): My question today is for the Minister of Health. I understand that the minister recently gave his final approval to the establishment of an MRI unit in Sudbury. However, Ontario continues to lag behind other jurisdictions in the use of this vital technology. MRIs can detect brain and spinal diseases, several forms of cancer, musculoskeletal disorders and several cardiovascular conditions that may not be diagnosed by other means of testing. It makes good common sense to ensure that Ontarians have access to the most advanced health care technologies. I wonder if the minister might reassure the House that he remains committed to reinvesting health care savings into additional MRI units and that, knowing the importance of these units, he'll make further announcements as soon as possible.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I want to thank the member for Scarborough Centre for his question because I think it's important that the people of Ontario receive the best diagnostic services available in the world today. MRI units, or magnetic-resonance-imaging units, are state-of-the-art technology. The goal of this government in reinvesting savings that we found through many of the line items in the current Ministry of Health budget is to increase the current number of MRI units from 12 that we have across the province to 23 over the next few months.

I say to the member for Scarborough Centre that we've already begun that process, as he mentioned in his question, in making the announcement recently in Sudbury for a new MRI unit in Sudbury along with my colleague the Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development and Mines. We also made an announcement in Timmins recently. I would think the opposition would be delighted that the first MRI machines to come on line

in many years in this province are in their ridings and are good news for the people of northern Ontario. I say to the member from Scarborough that there are another 21 machines and that we'll be addressing central Ontario and his area of the province in the very near future.

Mr Newman: Yesterday, I had the honour of bringing to the attention of this House the 40th anniversary of Scarborough General Hospital. The Scarborough hospitals group has provided the minister with a proposal that would locate the first MRI unit in Scarborough at Scarborough General Hospital. Scarborough, a city of more than half a million residents, does not currently have an MRI unit. As a supplementary, I would ask the minister if he is committed to ensuring that MRI technology is available to my constituents in Scarborough Centre and other residents of Scarborough.

Hon Mr Wilson: I'm pleased to assure the honourable member for Scarborough Centre that certainly Scarborough is one of the many areas in the province that we're looking at in making a reinvestment in an MRI unit. The goal of the government is to bring the ratio of units to population from one to 350,000 people in the population—one unit for every 350,000 people, which would finally bring Ontario up to world standards, in fact European standards. So we're really catching up to the rest of the world.

I would comment, because this is important, when we make an announcement, whether it be in health care or other announcements in this government, because of the new accounting system, we pay for these announcements when they're announced, unlike the previous government that talked about bringing MRI units on line in this province. You didn't budget for them. We found the money through savings in the health care, sealed the health care envelope. We're reinvesting that money. It's been good news for Timmins, good news for Sudbury, good news for the north, and we'll have some more good news for central Ontario and the rest of the people of the province.

RED HILL CREEK EXPRESSWAY

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. I would like to read a letter sent by Mike Harris to regional chairman Terry Cooke: "A Mike Harris government will support and fund a full-fledged expressway up to and including the six-lane model which was originally approved."

The letter to the chairman would have been a provincial commitment of \$182 million for a six-lane expressway. The region scaled the project back to five lanes for a provincial cost of \$150 million. This government has betrayed that commitment by a funding shortfall of \$50 million. They have only funded \$100 million of the \$150 million which the Premier's commitment was for. The government and this minister obviously do not understand the need for the Red Hill Creek Expressway in Hamilton-Wentworth.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Put your question.

Mr Agostino: You don't understand the betrayal. Mike Harris gave his word to the people of Hamilton-Wentworth.

Minister, will you commit today to restore full funding to the Red Hill Creek Expressway, or do you realize that by refusing to do so, you are ending the political career of your four Tory members in Hamilton-Wentworth?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): I am really at a loss for words. Here's the same member who didn't want the expressway built. Not too long ago he didn't want it built. The Red Hill Creek Expressway is a firm commitment that the Premier made and it's a commitment that we will fulfil and maintain.

Mr Agostino: I think that this minister obviously doesn't understand Hamilton, doesn't know what the expressway is all about, and it is absolutely ridiculous and asinine for this minister to suggest somewhere along the line that I haven't supported the expressway.

Mr Speaker, let me tell you who doesn't support the expressway. Let me tell you—

The Speaker: I have a feeling that one word was a little unparliamentary and I would ask if the member would withdraw it.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I don't know whether the members think it's fun or not, but it's a serious question and I want to hear it.

1530

Mr Agostino: The commitment made by this government was for a full-fledged six-lane expressway. The regional chairman has made it very clear that the provincial funding falls over \$50 million short of the six-lane expressway, or the five-lane. It cannot be done with the money that you have given to the region. It's very clear.

The regional chairman, who has been supportive of the efforts in the negotiations—your local members are running and hiding. They're afraid to deal with the media. They don't want to talk about the expressway.

The Premier committed to this. I can tell you, based on the discrepancy, either the regional chairman is lying or this government is lying.

The Speaker: Put your question, please.

Mr Agostino: I can tell you that I know the regional chairman, I know the issue, and he is not lying, and I can finish that sentence outside the House.

Minister, in view of the discrepancy, in view of the funding difference between what you have committed and what the region says they need, will you agree to an independent third-party review of the cost of finishing the expressway and abide by those results of the independent review?

The Speaker: The question has been asked.

Hon Mr Palladini: The question that the member has asked, I have already agreed to.

Interjections: What?

Hon Mr Palladini: An independent proposal.

AGRICULTURE PROGRAMS

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question now is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. I want to ask the Minister of Agriculture this: It's clear when I read this letter from Barb Fisher, the MPP for Bruce; Mr Vankoughnet, the MPP for Frontenac-Addington; Helen Johns, the MPP for Huron; Bert

Johnson, the MPP for Perth; Gary Stewart, the MPP for Peterborough—it's clear to me when I read this letter to the Premier and to the Deputy Premier about cuts to agriculture that your own backbenchers believe that you have broken a promise not to cut the budget of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs.

I wonder, can you explain how all these backbenchers feel that you have broken a promise, and yet the Premier says it's okay?

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): It's interesting, the question coming from my honourable critic. You know, before the Christmas break they were very concerned about funding for an ethanol project. We found \$8 million to fund ethanol. On the GRIP program, we went from 80% to 85%, another promise that was kept. On the farm tax rebate, something that the opposition figured was gone, we paid the full 75% back as we promised. I could use up the rest of question period, but I won't. I'll allow the honourable member a supplementary.

Mr Hampton: It's apparent that the Minister of Agriculture thinks this is a laughing matter. I want to tell the Minister of Agriculture this is not a laughing matter. You have cut, your government has cut, \$26.1 million from the agricultural budget already. You are proposing to cut, and your own colleagues say this, a further \$156 million in this coming fiscal year, and yet your own colleagues in the rural caucus advisory committee agreed unanimously on February 14, 1996, that the government should honour the Premier's commitment in the Common Sense Revolution and its Rural Economic Development policy booklet that there be no cuts to the OMAFRA budget. The motion was moved by Bert Johnson, MPP for Perth, seconded by Toby Barrett, MPP for Norfolk, and passed unanimously by your full rural advisory caucus.

They believe you're breaking a promise. What are you going to do about it?

Hon Mr Villeneuve: It's important for everyone to understand that the people who created the financial problem are attempting to prevent us from solving it. Farmers have told us they want to be part of the solution and not part of the problem. The budget my colleague will bring in in May will be the real answer.

DEER POPULATION

Mr Harry Danford (Hastings-Peterborough): My question today is for the Minister of Natural Resources. Many hunters and outdoor enthusiasts in my riding of Hastings-Peterborough enjoy the sport of deer hunting and in fact deer watching. In light of the particularly harsh winter, with record cold temperatures and snowfalls, many of my constituents are concerned about the declining white-tailed deer herds. Could the minister please report to the House the status of Ontario's deer population at present?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): I'd like to thank the member for Hastings-Peterborough. This is a very important issue and of concern to residents right across

Ontario. As he's mentioned, we have had a particularly severe winter. Similar winters in 1958-59 and 1971-72 resulted in significant herd die-offs. This year, I'm pleased to announce in the House and to the member that the white-tailed deer herd in Ontario is in good shape. The reason for that, even though we've had a severe winter, is the excellent cooperation we've had with global conservation clubs and provincial organizations which have cut trails in deer yards and raised funds for the controlled winter deer feed program. I want to thank them on behalf of the MNR.

Mr Danford: I would deal more specifically with the Peterson Road deer yard in my riding. The minister mentioned the number of white-tailed deer. Often we find they do tend to yard, if you want to call it that, in large herds during a particularly severe winter, and we have had that sort of winter in our area. I have received numerous calls from my constituents who are concerned about the conservation implications of hunting deer when they are concentrated in such a confined area. Minister, will these concerns be raised when the Ontario government begins negotiations with the 1996 Algonquin hunting agreement? Can you address those concerns?

Hon Mr Hodgson: This is a serious conservation issue, the harvesting of deer when they're yarded. I've spoken to a number of individuals about this matter, and I know it's of concern to everyone in Ontario. I've asked that this issue and this concern be dealt with in the context of the 1996 Algonquin hunting agreement, which is under negotiation between the Ontario government and the first nation at this time.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. You will know that in the pre-budget report of the committee on finance, they have acknowledged that Ontario is in a significant jobs crisis. In fact, we're well behind numbers laid out in your plan for the campaign on jobs. Specifically, Ontario youth has a major problem, facing a 30% unemployment rate. I'd like to know what your government is planning to do to address the youth employment issue.

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): I'm very happy to answer the question. You are aware, as are the rest of the people in the House, that we made a projection—and the Premier referred to it yesterday—of creating 725,000 new jobs over five years. I'm happy to report to the member that in the month of February there were 31,000 new jobs created in Ontario. I'm happy to say that that is the best February improvement we've had since 1981. I think if the member reflects on those statistics, she will realize that that is just a sample of what's to come and it's going to help our young people.

1540

Mrs Pupatello: I need to make it very clear that regardless that the minister doesn't answer the question, he predicted 145,000 a year, not 30,000, so you're still well behind. We asked specifically about youth employment and what you're planning to do for youth and what are the programs that you'll be dealing with.

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): Youth.

Mrs Pupatello: Youth. Youth unemployment standing at 30%.

Now, specifically there are rumours that you are cutting the youth venture program so that young entrepreneurs can start small business and therefore get into jobs in that way. There are also rumours that the Ministry of Education and Training will be cutting all of the student grant programs for the summer. This is a significant issue for youth in Ontario and I'd like a straight answer.

Hon Mr Saunderson: I would like to tell the House about a meeting of the Northern Ontario Tourist Outfitters Association that I attended last fall. At that meeting, there were many of the tourist outfitters, obviously, present, and they were very pleased to know what we were doing to help small businesses—

Mr Colle: Youth. Youth.

Hon Mr Saunderson: —because one of the things that affects the tourist outfitters is that during the summertime—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order. Order, the member for Brampton South.

Hon Mr Saunderson: —they hire many students, and I'm very happy to report that they were very pleased to know we have frozen the minimum wage. That is a very big impetus for them to hire more students in the summertime.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): Happy to know that? I'm delighted to know that, of course.

Hon Mr Saunderson: The opposition benches should know. They should know this, that our minimum wage is the highest of any province in Canada. We are going to freeze the minimum wage until we are the lowest. That is going to create jobs—

Mr Colle: What about youth jobs?

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): Let's get it down to—

Hon Mr Saunderson: —and that member over there should realize this, that your party and the other government party over the past 10 years raised that wage so high that it hurt the students trying to get jobs in the summer. You will be very pleased to know that this summer there will be many more students hired by the northern Ontario tourist outfitters, and I'm sure that when you look back next fall and see that the jobs have improved for the young people during the summer, you will reflect back to this question today and be somewhat embarrassed by the success—

The Speaker: The question has been answered.

Hon Mr Saunderson: I also say that when I was speaking to these tourist outfitters—

Interjections.

The Speaker: The question has been answered. Order, order.

ONTARIO HOUSING CORP

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I would say the answer to that last question was the largest abuse on the part of a minister trying to kill time, not to answer a question.

None the less, my question's to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, I have your document from the—

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: I'll try it again. The opposition members—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Who's your question to?

Mr Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, I have your document with me from the Ontario Housing Corp that points out that you, as minister, have directed that over the next two years you're going to be cutting from the capital budget of improvements for Ontario Housing by 40%. That means to say simply that the 80,000 units that are presently within Ontario Housing are not going to have the money they need in order to keep them in good repair and it will put those particular units in jeopardy.

What I want to ask you is simply this: Are you intending on transporting your managerial style from the TTC, where you allowed that particular commission to fall into disrepair and get into the situation it is now; that you're going to bring forward that particular management style—

The Speaker: Would the member put his question, please.

Mr Bisson: I want to quote specifically from a quote here from the Toronto Sun. "When asked about a scathingly critical report authored by the Washington, DC, expert...that pointed out a lack of preventive maintenance programs and poor communication between TTC departments, Leach said that in his opinion, he disagrees." You disagree that cutting those budgets by 40% won't put Ontario Housing out of repair—

Interjections.

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister?

Hon Al Leach (Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing): I'm sorry, I couldn't hear the question. Could you repeat the question?

The Speaker: The time for oral question period has expired.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I am very concerned about what just transpired. I think that you yourself have attempted to be fair. We saw very clearly that the Minister of Economic Development and Trade attempted to run out the clock to give an answer that had no content.

Interjections.

Ms Lankin: Mr Speaker, I'll wait until there is some order.

The Speaker: Order.

Ms Lankin: He attempted to run out the clock, and it was done as a joke. We could see him looking at the clock, and his caucus was cheering him on. All of that is fine, because there was no damage done because the Speaker sought a remedy for that by providing the opportunity for the member from our caucus to ask a question. But with the hooting and the hollering that was taking place in this place, the minister the question was directed to says he's unable to hear it and then you end oral question period.

Mr Speaker, I think there is a requirement for the minister, who's walking out at this point in time, who

just didn't want to answer the question—he had his earpiece out; he could hear the question—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. It's not my responsibility whether somebody listens to a question or whether they don't. It's not my responsibility whether they answer the question or they don't.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): Mr Speaker, on a point of order: Whether or not the minister chose to answer the question is not the issue. He said he could not hear it. The member for Cochrane South should be allowed to ask the question again so the minister can hear it and thus he can respond. It is not acceptable that he be called to sit down and that we go on to routine proceedings. He should be allowed to put the question again.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): If it pleases the House, I would seek unanimous consent to have the member briefly put his question so the minister can respond.

The Speaker: Briefly.

Mr Bisson: You're cutting by 40% the moneys needed to keep the Ontario Housing stock in order. The question is simply this: Do you plan on bringing those management styles you had at the TTC back to the Ministry of Housing under the OHC, where they won't have the money to keep their stock in good repair?

Hon Mr Leach: I can commit to this House that I will bring my excellent management style to this House.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): Point of order: I think it has been customary in this House that—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Do you have a point of order here?

Mr Phillips: Yes—that when a policy on minimum wage is announced, it's announced as a ministerial statement. Today we heard that the government plans to freeze the minimum wage until it is the lowest in Canada. I believe that should have been a ministerial statement, not a response to a question, and I wonder if you might rule on that, Mr Speaker.

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would just like to correct myself. What I had meant to say, and I stand corrected, was that we were wanting to have the minimum wage on a par with the adjoining jurisdictions.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): I move that Mr Bartolucci and Mr Sergio exchange places in order of precedence for private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): You've all heard the motion. Do you agree? Agreed.

1550

PETITIONS

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario that says:

"Whereas the Harris government plans to sell public housing;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario not to privatize public housing and allow for public hearings."

I affix my signature to hundreds of people who share those same sentiments.

COMMON SENSE REVOLUTION

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a petition signed by approximately 25 residents of my constituency. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads:

"Whereas Mike Harris said on May 30, 1995, 'If I don't live up to anything that I have promised to do and committed to do, I will resign'; and

"Whereas Mike Harris promised on May 3, 1995, 'No cuts to health care spending'"—and it goes on further that he promised to create 725,000 new jobs—"and

"Whereas Mike Harris has clearly broken his promise to create significant jobs in the province; and

"Whereas Mike Harris promised in the Common Sense Revolution that 'aid for seniors and the disabled will not be cut,' but in his November 29 economic statement Mike Harris is cutting the Ontario drug benefit plan and making seniors and the vulnerable pay for their drugs; and

"Whereas Mike Harris has clearly broken his promise to seniors and the disabled;

"We, the undersigned, demand that Mike Harris keep his word and resign immediately."

I affix my name to it.

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"The government of Ontario is planning to implement tax cuts that will benefit well-off people while at the same time they have cut income to the poor, and 46% of Ontario families make less than \$35,000 a year but will get only 7.3% of the benefits of the proposed tax cuts (or about \$462 per year). Families with total incomes of over \$95,000 a year make up only 9.2% of all Ontario families, but they will get 32.7% of the benefits. In these tough times it is unconscionable that the poor will go hungry while the wealthy are given more.

"We, the undersigned, request that the Legislature of Ontario not approve any tax cuts until the causes of poverty and unemployment in Ontario are dealt with effectively and until the province's debt and deficit are paid down."

I affix my signature to this as well.

SECURITY OF LEGISLATIVE PRECINCT

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Legislative Assembly of Ontario belongs to the people of this province; and

"Whereas the people of this province are extremely concerned about the excessive force used by police to injure more than five people at this Legislature on Monday, March 18, 1996; and

"Whereas any internal investigation by the Speaker of this Legislature would require a report by the OPP and the Sergeant at Arms, which is inappropriate, because the OPP are the subject of concern and the Sergeant at Arms has publicly commented on the issue; and

"Whereas any referral of this issue to the Legislative Assembly committee would be inappropriate as it would become a partisan review in a political arena; and

"Whereas the Solicitor General and several other cabinet ministers have already passed judgement on this issue by making comments to the media and in the House defending the actions of the OPP's use of an excessive display of force;

"We, the undersigned, demand that the government launch immediately an independent public inquiry under the Public Inquiries Act to investigate the use of force used by the Ontario Provincial Police on behalf of the Legislative Assembly on Monday, March 18, 1996."

This is signed by a number of Ontario citizens. They will be very pleased that the government has acceded to the request that they've made in this petition, and I'm proud to sign my name.

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Gary L. Leadston (Kitchener-Wilmot): I'd like to present a petition.

"We, the undersigned, request that the Legislature of Ontario not approve any tax cuts until the causes of poverty and unemployment in Ontario are dealt with effectively and until the province's debt and deficit are paid down."

TEACHER TRAINING

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislature.

"Whereas the public secondary teachers of Ontario have taken a workplace democracy vote in accordance with Bill 7 and have rejected the proposed Ontario College of Teachers by a 94.8% vote;

"We, the undersigned, urge the provincial assembly to instruct the government to withdraw Bill 31, the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1995."

This petition is signed by virtually all the teachers at Manitoulin Secondary School, including Mr Rob Cassibo.

ST JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition addressed to the Minister of Health and the Hamilton-Wentworth district health council.

"Whereas the Hamilton-Wentworth health action task force, as part of their report, has recommended the closure of St Joseph's Hospital in Hamilton; and

"Whereas it is recognized the health care system should be made as efficient as possible; and

"Whereas the quality of health care service in our community should not be sacrificed in the name of efficiency; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government promised to protect the quality of health care in Ontario; and

"Whereas we, the undersigned, believe that maintaining the presence of St Joseph's Hospital in downtown Hamilton is a vital component of our health care system;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Minister of Health and the Hamilton-Wentworth District Health Council ensure the continuance of St Joseph's Hospital at its present site."

I add my name to the petitioners.

TAX REDUCTION

Mr E.J. Douglas Rollins (Quinte): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned, request the Legislature of Ontario not to approve the tax cut until the causes of poverty and unemployment in Ontario are dealt with effectively and until the province's debt and deficit are paid down."

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I have a petition signed by over 350 people from my riding and from Fort William riding as well and I am pleased to read it. They are very concerned about maintaining affordable housing in Thunder Bay and across the province. The petition reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Housing has indicated an intent to privatize public housing units and intensify the housing crisis in Ontario; and

"Whereas all Ontarians have a basic right to fair and affordable shelter; and

"Whereas such privatization will cause financial hardship and insecurity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to disallow the privatization of public housing units and to ensure that existing structures are adequately maintained."

I am proud to sign my signature to it.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have a petition from the people of Monteith, who are walking the picket line, and other people out there who are also out there in support, that reads:

"To the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government plans to sell off public services to the corporations who will run them for profit; and

"Whereas the corporate takeover will be strictly user-pay for the service we now depend on; and

"Whereas our clean air and water standards and workers' safety rules are being relaxed because corporations don't like the rules that interfere with profits; and

"Whereas the privatization is being sold as a way to save tax dollars even though large companies pay little or no taxes while individual Canadians pay most of their total tax bill; and

"Whereas Bill 7 was introduced in the interest of facilitating its privatization agenda by stripping public sector workers of their rights to retain fair working conditions when services are transferred or privatized;

"We, the following citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to abandon the selloff of Ontario public services and reinstate successor rights for those public service employees."

I affix my name to that petition.

TRANSITION HOUSE

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): I have a petition from a number of residents in Kent county. I'm not going to read it all. It has a rather long preamble. It is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Transition House in Chatham has provided emergency shelter to troubled or abused youth, as well as support, counselling and life skills training since 1990, and operating on a five-year budget of \$865,000, they have counselled over 400 youth and served over 20,000 meals;

"Whereas the city of Chatham and the county of Kent rely on Transition House to meet the needs of its troubled youth and there is no other facility to serve the needs of the community; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has cut its direct funding to Transition House by almost \$48,000 annually and placed the existence of Transition House in jeopardy;

"Be it therefore resolved that we, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to reverse its decision to cut the funding of Transition House in Chatham-Kent."

I affix my signature to this.

1600

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE PENSIONS

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): "Whereas Bill 26 exempts the government as an employer from key legislation governing pensions in Ontario; and

"Whereas employees of the Ontario government have been stripped of their right to access pension security, a right that other workers in Ontario have; and

"Whereas this represents the theft of hundreds of millions of dollars in pension benefits from working people; and

"Whereas as a result thousands of workers who face being laid off in the coming months could be forced into poverty;

"We, the following undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to reinstate the rights removed by schedule L of Bill 26."

I assign my signature to this petition.

JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): "Whereas the Conservative government's stated plan in the Common Sense Revol-

ution is to improve the long-term economic prospects of Ontario; and

"Whereas research from all over the world shows early childhood education leads to lower dropout rates, improved reading, math and language skills, less chance of future unemployment, teen pregnancy or delinquency and higher enrolment in post-secondary education, thus resulting in a better-educated, highly skilled workforce; and

"Whereas this Conservative government states it is committed to ensuring a larger share of the education dollar goes to the classroom; and

"Whereas this Conservative government fully expects boards to meet transfer reductions by cutting costs outside the classroom; and

"Whereas this Conservative government has made junior kindergarten a matter of choice for local school boards and has reduced the funding for junior kindergarten;

"Therefore, to ensure this Conservative government meets its stated commitments in regard to education and to Ontario, we, the undersigned, call on the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Education and Training to restore the funding for junior kindergarten to its previous level and require all school boards to offer junior kindergarten classes."

I affix my signature.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Harris government plans to sell public housing;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario not to privatize public housing and to allow for public hearings."

This is signed by a number of my constituents from London Centre and also from such places as Thamesford, New Hamburg, St Thomas and Union. I am proud to affix my signature.

JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition brought to my attention by a number of residents of Ontario.

"Whereas the Conservative government's stated plan in the Common Sense Revolution is to improve the long-term economic prospects of Ontario; and

"Whereas research from all over the world shows early childhood education leads to lower dropout rates, improved reading, math and language skills, less chance of future unemployment, teen pregnancy or delinquency and higher enrolment in post-secondary education, thus resulting in a better-educated, highly skilled workforce; and

"Whereas this Conservative government states it is committed to ensuring a larger share of the education dollar goes to the classroom; and

"Whereas this Conservative government fully expects boards to meet transfer reductions by cutting costs outside the classroom; and

"Whereas this Conservative government has made junior kindergarten a matter of choice for local school boards and has reduced the funding for junior kindergarten;

"Therefore, to ensure this Conservative government meets its stated commitments in regard to education and to Ontario, we, the undersigned, call on the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Education and Training to restore the funding for junior kindergarten to its previous level and require all school boards to offer junior kindergarten classes."

I affix my signature to this petition.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have a petition here signed by a number of people from Iroquois Falls and Nellie Lake and Porquis Junction. It is addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the members of the Ontario public service are earnestly attempting to negotiate an equitable and respectful collective agreement with the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas a fair collective agreement is evidence of this government's respect for Ontario's public services, the workers who provide them and those who need them; and

"Whereas by introducing Bill 7 and Bill 26 prior to commencing negotiations, the government removed significant rights from OPSEU members that other workers in Ontario retain; and

"Whereas reducing the size of the civil service can be achieved through attrition, without attacking basic rights and dignities of hardworking people; and

"We, the following undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to negotiate responsibly and in good faith with the Ontario Public Service Employees Union towards a fair and respectful collective agreement."

I support and will sign that petition.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Mr Martin from the standing committee on government agencies presented the fifth report of the committee.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Pursuant to standing order 106(g)(11), the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

CITY OF OTTAWA ACT, 1996

Mr Guzzo moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr42, An Act respecting the city of Ottawa.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

CONCURRENCE IN SUPPLY

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for concurrence in supply for the following ministries:

Ministry of Education and Training, supplementary
Ministry of Community and Social Services
Ministry of Housing
Ministry of Transportation, supplementary
Ministry of Health, supplementary
Ministry of Economic Development and Trade

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): It's my pleasure to continue my discussion begun yesterday on the estimates. We had the opportunity over the last couple of months to sit in during estimates and hear ministers make comment on the last term of government, but also making comment on what they anticipate doing through the next year. That, of course, led us to discussions yesterday, particularly in the area of education and children's services.

After a brief 10 minutes yesterday, I got back to my office only to find that a number of people had called from across Ontario who had heard the Liberal position on what this government is intending and is doing to education. People were calling me from areas like Belleville. The member for Quinte may want to take notice that there are a number of people where you come from, in your community, who are having a terrible time dealing with the cuts to education. In fact, many others from across Ontario are calling, saying, "We are having a terrible time dealing with cuts in education." It means they're laying off teachers, and there are teachers, especially young teachers across Ontario, who've already received their pink slip.

They were shocked by it, because they knew what the position of Conservative candidates was during the election. Why did those candidates have that position? Because they all carried around their little document for the campaign. I think they pointed out elements of the document that said something like, "Any reductions in the number of teachers required could be managed through attrition." This is the kind of stuff you went door to door with during the campaign, but they've already received their pink slips. I don't think they're receiving pink slips because of attrition.

We're finding time and time again, regardless of the discussion, regardless of the ministry, that they're going back to what you told them during the campaign, but what you're doing is something completely different. But where it concerns education, all of us in Ontario, every one of us, have a problem with that because that is going to impact on who will be driving Ontario 20 years from now. Where are the children going to be who are now at risk, who are not finding the kind of support they need through the agencies you have continued to cut? Even though you talked about having a great concern for children, your actions simply don't bear out that that is indeed what you're thinking.

I challenge every single member in this House on that side of the government to come to me and discuss this issue of education, that your Minister of Education and Training has let you all down. Please listen to the consti-

tuents in the riding that you come from, and listen to them tell you that they're having a major problem in how the cuts in education are not going to affect the classroom because they already are.

1610

Firstly, you've got a morale problem with members in the staff, an employee of the ministry. The minister today on his feet said: "They're not really our employees. They're employed by the board of education, and the board is funded by the ministry." That's what you call a member of the broader public sector. Whether we like that or not, those are people that we are responsible to. Those are the people who are going to mete out what your policy-setting is.

Those teachers on the front line are being affected. You started in the month of January to say that you were going to find all your cuts by cutting the amount of prep time. It's such an easy place to target, because once again in this discussion you've decided to be divisive and blame the teachers for the problems that exist. It's all of our problem, and all of you know that it takes "an entire village to raise a child." It's your responsibility, like it is mine, to see that the children in Ontario are going to have that opportunity.

Instead, the children in Ontario are busy calling us saying, "Can we even come to Queen's Park to visit the Legislature?" Because of the kind of policy-setting and arrogance in letting that policy out and how it affects real people in Ontario, we have the kind of strike situation that we see surrounding the building today where people cannot feel comfortable even coming to Queen's Park and watching parliamentary procedure in Ontario.

Today's news reports—and I wonder how many government members recognize that the editorials of all the major papers, including, say, this one today in the *Toronto Star*, are on the worldwide Internet.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Order, please.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): Read from the *Windsor paper*.

Mrs Pupatello: Even the one from the *Windsor Star*. All of the major Canadian newspapers are talking about all the shenanigans that you've decided to stir up over the OPSEU strike.

But all in good context, and over the long term I suppose you'll say this too will pass, but at the same time and out of the other side of your mouth you're talking about wanting Ontario to be open for business.

Our Premier was opening a plant yesterday and doing the sod turning, but all of the reporters wanted to question him on: "How is this going to affect business? What about the visuals that are coming out of Queen's Park these days? What kind of long-term impact is that going to have?" Your Premier said: "I hope that they'll turn a blind eye. Those visuals aren't very good. No, that doesn't make us look very good at all."

In fact, the more they write about, I think we want to say, "It's time for the Premier to show some leadership, and govern in the interest of all Ontarians."

That's fine. This is within the confines of Ontario, but this is also on the worldwide Internet. So everyone in Tokyo and London, England, they're all reading too the

problem in leadership that Ontario is facing, that what the Premier is doing is not helping the situation.

We wanted to talk today about a major crisis that Ontario faces, and again we're talking about youth in Ontario. Your Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism did not want to acknowledge youth today. How many of you sitting in this House could stand to listen to the answer from that minister, who didn't want to acknowledge the issue of youth employment?

Currently, the unemployment rate stands at 30%. Now, this member may want to comment on the youth, and you can make a joke about it if you like. The reality is there's 30% of them who don't have employment, and at the same time the Minister of Education is increasing tuition, radically increasing tuition year after year. So what are we going to do about it, because it is all of our problem? It's a jobs crisis.

Now, I know that many of you followed the pre-budget hearings that went on and the report that was made on the whole issue of jobs. So let's go a little beyond just youth and just jobs in general. I know there are Conservative members who are concerned about where the jobs are going. It's a serious issue, because while you're cutting the social spending, we're also laying the ground to require more social spending. If we can equate that then, we're not going to get anywhere. So we've got to let you understand.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Given the importance of the speech that the member for Windsor-Sandwich is giving, I think we should have quorum in the House.

The Acting Speaker: Is there a quorum present?

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees (Ms Deborah Deller): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees: A quorum is now present.

The Acting Speaker: We'll resume debate.

Mrs Pupatello: I'm glad to see that some members may indeed be interested in a discussion about youth employment. Today, we had an issue come up during question period—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Will the member for Windsor-Sandwich take her seat, please. Could I have order in the House, please. Order. Thank you very much.

Mrs Pupatello: I'm hoping that there are Conservative members in the House today, indeed around the building, who may be interested in the crisis that Ontario is facing in youth employment. Our unemployment rate for youth stands at 30%. That affects me, that affects you, every one of us in our ridings, and if we are active in our roles as parliamentarians, we are talking to youth in our communities. We go to our high schools, we go to our grade schools, we go to colleges and universities, and we ask the young people of Ontario where do they think they're going to be in five years, where are they going to be in 10 years.

I want to tell you that so far, my experience is one of significant hopelessness for the young people today. They're concerned about how they're going to pay for an education, because they can't afford it. They want to go, they have the grades to go on, they have various hopes

and dreams to fulfil in their futures. They're not finding the path open to them. So today, during question period, we had to ask the Minister of Economic Development.

There are rumours abounding everywhere about the cuts the government is making, but specifically in the area of youth, the threat to cancel the venture programs for young entrepreneurs. This is significant, because it is usually a Conservative member who's going to tell you that the move to new jobs is through small business growth, yet we're talking about cancelling young venture programs so that young people will have a way to get into the business world. Then we have rumours about the cuts to student employment programs for the summer.

Here are the very sincere students who are intent on making sure they have a job, because they've got to pay their tuition, or at least help with it. They don't have the jobs available. For myriad reasons, those jobs aren't there anymore. We do have parents coming back into the workforce because they too have a need to work. They're taking the part-time jobs that used to be open to students. Those jobs aren't there. People are staying in the workforce for a very long time, because they don't feel the security of retiring when they would have liked to.

There are major social reasons young people are having difficulty in finding that employment, but there's a much larger issue facing young people when they're done their education and they're trying to get their first job in the workplace. They're finding that the doors are closed. You have companies making record profits in a number of different industries, but they're doing it through significant job loss. We may have some kind of recovery in various parts of North America, but it's what they're calling a jobless recovery.

When I go to the high schools and I go to Holy Names in Windsor and ask any of the students, all the students, what kind of hope they have for the future, they tell me they're scared. I know that if you've gone to your high schools and you ask those who are in grade 12 or OAC now, "Where are you going to go next?" they say, "I hope I have the money to pay for the tuition."

This is not a problem that was created overnight. This problem didn't all of a sudden jump out because we have a Conservative government, although it'd be great to be able to say that. Frankly, it's a problem that's been with us for some time. You do have a responsibility, because you're a member of government, to do something about it, and my job is to point it out to you. When we tried to do that today with your minister, he's got the audacity to ignore the question and to ignore the significant crisis that youth face in Ontario. All of you might want to laugh about that, but I've got to tell you that at least half of you were as surprised as I was that your minister wouldn't recognize that he did have programs for youth and he didn't want to acknowledge that in his answer.

If we'd had the Minister of Education and Training here to talk about what the student training programs are going to be—we know Jobs Ontario is gone. We might have questioned too how relevant it was to students long-term or to youth. But regardless, governments of the past have always made an attempt. Governments in the past have been on record to say, "We are going to try to address the issue." But so far the Conservative government has been silent on this issue and at 30% just for

youth unemployment, we have to realize that we are in crisis where the youth of Ontario is concerned and we—all of us, every member in the House—cannot afford to be silent on it.

1620

Politicians country-wide are dealing and grappling with the issue. Politicians in all of G-7 are grappling with this issue, just job creation overall. It's very easy for the youth to get lost in the shuffle while 50-year-olds being laid off from plants after having been in one occupation can barely find a job, whether it's a language barrier or whatever. It's an enormous issue, and so the youth do tend to get lost.

Interjection.

Mrs Pupatello: If you want to sit there and heckle me today, I'm asking you, as a member of the government side, what are you doing about it? If the door is open a little closer for you than it is for me to get a message to the ministers who are responsible to show leadership on it, what are you doing to bring the issue to bear to your ministers? Are all of you talking about it? I'll talk about what you did talk about. In here you talked about a youth corps program. Are you aware that it's in your document too? Except your youth corps program was talking about welfare recipients. Yes, they need jobs too.

How many of you have studied the graphs and the ups and downs and the statistics of welfare in your own community? If you had looked at the cases of welfare in your own community, then you would know—

Interjection.

Mrs Pupatello: I'm having a hard time realizing the humour of this discussion. If you really study the statistics of jobs in your own community, you'll see that every time the unemployment rate drops, so does the welfare case in your community. So if you had to draw a graph, every time you have job growth in your own community your welfare rolls go down. This should tell every one of you that if we can move on job creation, you're going to drop your welfare rolls. There's an enormous correlation and you don't need to be a scientist to figure it out. Jobs have got to start to become your priority here. You can cut as much as you like, but if we don't see any job growth, we're going to have a major problem.

I admit that you see me as just a Liberal MPP. What could I possibly know about the jobs issue? Let's talk about people you might listen to. Would you be interested in hearing their point of view? Let's talk about a report that was written on your pre-budget hearing on finance. Let's talk about what they had to say about job creation.

"No witness who addressed the issue had particularly high expectations that the province's economy would be generating a large number of jobs in 1996 or 1997. General comments by witnesses on the stimulative effects of tax cuts, the economic drag of expenditure cuts, or an improved business climate address job creation along with economic growth."

More importantly, "Specific comments on job creation came from the expert witness from Informetrica, who predicted continuing sluggish job growth (as did all the other expert witnesses)"—again this is your committee, so I'm trusting that you'd listen to this kind of a report and be concerned; you might be the government side, but

this is all of our problem, not just yours, so we all have to address it—"possibly only enough to keep the unemployment rate from rising." That is, it doesn't get any worse, but of course that means it's not going to get any better either.

"The expert witness who had been with the Fair Tax Commission made detailed projections, summarized above, on job losses resulting from expenditure cuts. Finally, the expert witness from the Bank of Nova Scotia pointed out that the service industry is currently restructuring with effects that can be expected to be similar to restructuring in the manufacturing industry—a process which resulted in major job losses...."

It's a sobering document, and we all have to recognize its importance. Again, I only have to stress that we're talking about overall job creation, job loss and government policy role in all of that, but specifically, do not let the youth of Ontario get lost in the shuffle.

Unemployment rates for youth have never been this high and they've been getting worse, year after year. You can politicize as much as you want, but the real check for you will be to go home and go in your ridings and talk to your young people, just ask them. It's not the same as when you were there, trust me. The aims are different. The aims are lower. The aims and the expectations are not as high as they were any more, not even when John Baird was there, which was a lot less time ago than most of you. But the reality is, you've got to get back there and ask them where they think they're going to be in 10 years, because the opportunities aren't there.

What is government's role for that? If governments could figure out what our role is in job creation, we would still be in power, quite frankly, and this government cannot profess to have all the answers. So please don't put all of your eggs in one basket because you think that a stimulative tax cut is the answer to your prayers. It's not going to be. Other jurisdictions have already proven that to us.

The long-term effect, what you do to young persons when they don't get that first job after four years of university and they find themselves being underemployed, I suppose it's our attitude too on what we consider good employment for young people, but the point is that this has a long-term implication for the people who are going to be the leaders in our communities and the leaders in our society. They just don't have it as easy as we did when we were younger. So every one of us has a responsibility.

I'd like to finish by just commenting on other children's programs, and these are mostly children at risk who have to be given the assistance to get to what the average mean is of expectation for young people.

Your Mike Harris promised—one of them—in the documents to initiate a province-wide breakfast program, and if he talked about any social programs at all—I admit he did not talk about many and I know you were pleased to hear that, but the rest of us weren't as thrilled—he talked about at least a breakfast program—

The Acting Speaker: Could the member for Nepean please take his seat.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I believe my friend from Windsor is in violation of standing order 22(a).

The Acting Speaker: Which is?

Mr Baird: Which is, "Every member desiring to speak must rise in his or her place and address" their comments to "the Speaker."

The Acting Speaker: The member does have a point. Could you please try to direct your comments directly to the Speaker.

Mrs Pupatello: Madam Speaker, the one important project province-wide to introduce today, of all days, is the breakfast program, and I can understand how busy the Premier must have been all of this time.

The reality is that he issued a challenge to me and threw down the gauntlet and said, "Go tell Pupatello to start one herself," so we did do that. We didn't just do that; we did all the research for them.

Here he is with a staff of ministries that are legion, but we took it on anyway. We did all of the research. We looked at every program that exists, all the good ones, all the bad ones, and we put together all the important information that he needs to introduce a province-wide breakfast program with no additional cost to the taxpayer. But that needs leadership from the Premier's office, which is exactly what Mike Harris said in his years of opposition, and he drummed that point home.

Not only did we put it together, we put it on a silver platter and we handed it to the Premier. Because it impacts on other ministries, we gave copies of the breakfast program to the other ministries as well, and it's not going to cost them additional pennies, not even additional pennies.

We're waiting for that introduction of the breakfast program, because now you don't have any of your staff time involved; just do it. But the long-term effects of taking care of our children is far more important.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much.

Order, please. Before we move on to the next speaker, in fact the member for Nepean made a good point. Could I ask members to direct their comments to the Speaker.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have had the opportunity for some years here to sit on the estimates committee. I first went to the estimates committee back in 1990, where as a government member I worked quite long and quite well with the opposition members in order to make sure that the estimates that were brought forward in that committee have a good airing, there's some good debate about what goes on within each of the ministries when it comes to expenditures and, more importantly, to try to get the government to respond to some of those key concerns that members bring to the estimates committee over a period of time as the estimates are before the Legislative Assembly.

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The only thing I would say on that point before going on to some of my comments in regard to what I heard and saw through the estimates process of this fall and of this winter is that in the past under Tory governments, under Liberal governments and under an NDP government, there was an attempt at least I think on the part of the government to take that process somewhat seriously, so that members are able to bring their concerns to the estimates committee. Really that's the only forum that we have as members where we can go there and seriously discuss the issues at hand that are affecting the ministries that represent our constituents, the people in our ridings.

I would only urge the members of the government to push their government, to make sure they carry that process through. I recognize that the last estimates were the estimates of our government and maybe the government did not want to move on some of those initiatives, but I only wish that the governments take heed of that and recognize that your job on estimates committee as government members is not just to sit there and to support by and large what your ministers are telling you, but by and large to listen to what opposition members say, to listen to what each other says in regard to government members as well, so that we're able to take a look at how the ministries spend their money and how maybe they can better do that. I would just urge the government members to keep going in that direction, I think a process established under our government under the leadership of Bob Rae, and I would like to see that go on.

I want to go on to three or four different ministries that we heard before estimates, and I just want to make some quick comments. I would like first of all to start with health care, because I think that's the issue of all issues when it comes to most Ontarians, when it comes to the services that they get from their governments. People recognize now, not like they did 30 years ago—I would say 30 years ago it was quite opposite—that public health care is not only a necessity; it is a right. It is something that we have grown to accept in this Legislature and across this land, that the government of Ontario and the governments of other provinces be responsible and be the sole deliverer of that system of health care so that we can make sure that we have good public policy followed by public funding in order to make sure that if you're sick in your community you have an integrated system of health care that tends to respond—that doesn't only tend to respond but actually responds to the needs of the community.

I don't do this in order to be combative, but I want to remind government members, especially those in the back bench, that when the government ran in the last election—being the NDP government, one of the issues that we pointed out, we said, "Listen, health care is a major issue." We had grave concerns back in the election of June 1995 that if the Conservative government was elected there would be an erosion of our public system of health care towards a more private system of health care.

Unfortunately, I think we're starting to see that develop. We've seen under Bill 26, where the government has given the Minister of Health far-sweeping powers to be able to erode our system of public health care, to put many of the services that we have now presently within public institutions. I mean hospitals, I mean public labs, I'm talking about the services that we utilize in regard to diagnosis equipment such as CAT scans and MRIs, where there was, up until this January, a law that said that those services had to be provided in the public sector and had to be provided by institutions that were controlled within the boundaries of Ontario. Bill 26 has changed that and I caution the Minister of Health that we're going to get into a situation, as we allow the private sector to come in and to compete with the public sector in the question of health care—I first of all don't believe they can do it any cheaper. The reality is that the United States, if you look at their system of health care, is far more expensive than

our public system of health care. We have no lessons to learn from the private sector when it comes to how we run our health care system, because Ontario and Canada have the best and most affordable system of health care than we have in all of the free world.

But I just want to point out to the Legislature and those people watching that what I said to the Minister of Health at the time is very simply this: If you allow the private sector to come in, to go into competition with those public institutions out there, it will over a period of time give the ability of the government of the day to be able to move from a public system of health care over your private system one, citing the following example: You underfund your public system of health care, people lose the confidence in that system, they look for an alternative and, pop, up comes a private system where you're able to go out and buy extra insurance in order to be able to access those services. I very much fear that the government is sending us down a path that is going to be a very destructive one, I think, when we come to our system of health care.

I also want to remind the government that the government today, when it ran as an opposition party wanting to be government back in the election of June 1995, ran on the Common Sense Revolution. It was very clear. They had a program and that program said: "We will not cut health care spending. It's far too important. Frankly, as we all get older, we're going to need it more and more. Under this plan, health care spending will be guaranteed."

Well, I can tell you, in the riding of Cochrane South, you haven't done that. You have, first of all, already cut the spending at the Timmins and District Hospital, an institution that serves not only my community but communities across northeastern Ontario, and you have now announced that upcoming this year and the following year, you will be reducing in each of those years by at least \$1.4 million the budget of that hospital.

I say to you directly, as I said to the Minister of Health at the time when he appeared before the estimates committee: First of all, it is against the Common Sense Revolution. I thought if you held anything dear to your hearts, you would hold that together.

But more importantly, what really irks me and really, really angers me is that you are penalizing those institutions out there that have already gone through the process of restructuring. You are not recognizing that they have already done what the government is asking other hospitals in this province to do. You are looking at northern Ontario, and specifically the Timmins and District Hospital, with the attitude, "We want hospitals across this province to merge, number one; and number two, to undergo restructuring in order to make them more affordable."

We've already done that. We merged our hospital boards some seven or eight years ago. We went through an entire process by which, in that merger, we moved into a new facility. The Timmins and District Hospital board, along with the community and the workers who work at that hospital, underwent a humongous effort in order to be able to restructure the Timmins and District Hospital, and over a period of six years has not seen its budget increased once, other than the money we advanc-

ed them as the NDP government in order to make sure their funding shortfalls for those years—where they had a deficit, where they were not able to control, because it was outside their control—we made sure that they didn't fall back into removing services that were much needed in the community.

You are not only going back on the promise of the Common Sense Revolution but, quite frankly, you're penalizing people who have gone out and done what you've said you want others to do. It is one thing to go to a hospital system in Toronto, a system of 44 hospitals, and tell them to go through a restructuring and a merging of the system, which is not without difficulty—our community did it; Sault Ste Marie did it; Sudbury's in the process of doing it—it is one thing to go through that, but to turn around and to tell a community that's already done it, "Well, never mind, we're going to cut you again," it means—and I'm telling you now, services will be cut at the Timmins and District Hospital as sure as I'm standing here. When we go to that hospital two to three years from now, there will still be services offered at Timmins and District Hospital, the doors will still be open, but many of the services that we presently take for granted, that we worked hard for as a government under the leadership of Shelley Martel, as the Minister of Northern Development and Mines; the Minister of Health, Ruth Grier; the Premier, Bob Rae, and myself as the local member—and I would say a former member, Alan Pope, a Tory member, who was part of this process before me; we worked hard in order to attract services and specialists into our community—a lot of that is going to be put at jeopardy because this government does not want to recognize there are people out there who have already been doing what you guys have been asking others to do, and they've done it long before you came along.

I really object when I hear members of the government stand, as they did when the member from Windsor was up in her place speaking in regard to her debate, in regard to this particular issue, saying: "It is the spending of 10 years past. It is a Liberal and an NDP government that put us into this mess." You do not recognize the reality of what's happened over the last 10 years in this province. Number one, there has been, and there always has been, an extreme amount of work done both on the part of government at the provincial level and on the part of agencies within communities and municipalities in order to be able to find better ways of running those institutions so that they're more affordable. For you to stand here and try to say: "It's all the other governments' fault. It was the Liberals and New Democrats who put us in this mess," I think is so simplistic, it is such an idiotic comment to make, it really, I think, shows a lack of understanding that you have, as supposed members of this assembly, for what has happened in this province over the last 10 years.

The other thing that really bothers me is that you don't recognize that there has been a recession in this province, starting in the 1980s and going into the 1990s—and I would argue we're still in it. You stand there and you say: "Oh, there's this humongous deficit of \$10 billion, and because of that, we've got to do all kinds of wild and woolly things. We've got to fire 27,000 public sector employees, we've got to slash and burn services in the

province of Ontario, all in the name of the deficit." Get off the pot. The reality is you want to give a tax break. That's what this is all about. To come into this Legislature and to be seen around the province as being the party that cares about the deficit, and oh, my God, you're so concerned about the economy of the province of Ontario and the spending of the government, is really a lot of hooley.

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The reality is, you know it as well as I do, you are compounding the problem of the deficit of this province by going ahead with your irresponsible tax break, period. If you were really serious about trying to deal with the question of debt and the question of deficit, you would be trying to attack the problem, which is simply we have a loss of revenue because of what has happened in the recession. There are far fewer people working in 1995, even though we have a stronger economy because the economy has changed.

I met this morning with the people at Aquarius Mine, who are opening up a brand-new mine in my riding. It's going to be probably about 8,000 tonnes a day when it comes into operation, if everything goes well. Do you know how many jobs that creates? About 150. If you had created that mine 10 or 15 years ago, you probably would have had 400 to 500 people working there. The reality is that the economy has changed. Businesses, for all kinds of reasons that are out of our control and out of your control as a government, have had to learn how to run their mines and run their plants with a lot fewer people, and that means to say we've got less money as a government to pay for services.

So, one, you don't recognize that one of the problems of the government is a problem of revenue, and it has been one. The other question is a question of spending. I agree with the government when they say that they have to find more efficient ways to be able to run the programs that the government of Ontario puts in place. But the reality is that's not what you guys are all about here, because if you were truly interested in being able to attack the spending side of the problem, what you would do is you would first of all say, "Before we go out and we slash and burn in programs, we will come up with alternatives of how (a) we deliver those services in a different way or (b) if we need to deliver them at all." You're not doing that. You're not reforming the way that government programs are done.

I take a look at the cut that you did at the Ministry of Northern Development and Mines. You cut programs like OMIP, the Ontario mineral incentive program; you cut programs like OPAP, the Ontario prospectors assistance program; you cut the people in the field in order to be able to work with the geologists out there, in order to be able to go out and assist them with the business of being able to find new mines. You didn't take a look at how you can offer those services better to the people of the province of Ontario.

Mr Speaker, nice to see you in the chair.

What you really did is you turned around and you just said basically, "The Minister of Northern Development and Mines, Mr Hodgson, has to bring before the cabinet table, as a good cabinet crony of the Mike Harris government, his share in the tax cut that he's going to pass on

to people." That is transcended into a number and you just cut programs. So what are we left with? We're left without the programs that we need in order to help our economy go, in order to create the jobs.

There were programs—and I talk about the north because that's where I come from; of course I'll talk about northern Ontario—but you've cut the very programs in the north that are necessary for economic development. Gone is the money that we had in the heritage fund in regard to being able to assist businesses in being able to get the key financing that they need to go to banks in order to start up businesses. The Northern Ontario Development Corp is another one that has been cancelled.

I can point to my riding and I can show you specifically buildings that have been constructed where there are businesses in them that are operating world-class operations because the government understood, under Bob Rae, under Shelley Martel, under Ed Philip and others, that the government has not only a role but a responsibility when it comes to economic development.

For the government to come into the House and say to the people of Ontario, "We don't have to do any of this stuff, because if we cut the government expenditures and we cut the red tape and we get rid of those nasty laws that protect the environment and workers, all this investment will come forward." Come on, give me a break. That doesn't work in the Third World and it's not going to work in Ontario, for God's sake. Where do you guys come from?

The reality is that when you look at investments such as Malette granite in the community of Iroquois Falls, we built a world-class operation there where they're developing and producing granite products that are being sold across all of North America. In fact the community of Iroquois Falls, under Malette granite, is selling the very granite and finishing the very granite that is being put on the Parliament Building in the restoration of that building.

That's happening in Iroquois Falls. Why? Because the Northern Ontario Development Corp, along with the heritage fund and Jobs Ontario Training and under the leadership of Bob Rae and of the ministers responsible and of myself as a local member, worked with the community, worked with the proponents of that particular project, worked with the employees in some cases in order to make that project possible.

Did it happen just because of us? Of course not. The people who own that plant, who worked towards putting that plant in place obviously were the ones who wanted to make it happen. But government played a responsibility and played a role in being able to bring that plan forward.

All kinds of examples: the expansion at Iroquois Falls in regard to Northland Power and the cogeneration plant that was built there; the expansion of the OSB out in Timmins in regard to Malette waferboard. There were more new investments in the forestry sector in northern Ontario in the time of our government than there was in the previous 15 years put together when it came to the construction of new production facilities for wood fibre. And why? Because our government recognized that what

we need to do is that we need to recognize that the government has to play a role and play the leading responsibility in making that happen.

I wanted to put that on the record, because I think it's important that members understand that government does have a responsibility when it comes to the whole question of economic development. And let's not kid ourselves. What you're really doing here is you're trying to figure out a way to raise money in order to make a tax cut. This is what really this is all about.

I want to point out a couple of things in the 10 minutes or so I've got left. I guess the first thing I would want to say is I want to go through a couple of key areas in regard to what this government has moved on. I would also like to point out what the position of the Liberal Party has been on these issues since the last election and where they're at. In fact, I don't see any of the Liberal Party here, so I would hope they're in watching this within their offices.

But I would say the following: There is, for an example, a move on the part of this government to go from publicly funded non-profit day care to move towards a private system of day care where there are going to be vouchers given. In other words, if I'm a young mother or a young couple and I want to put my child in day care, the system, as you know, is going to change. It will be, first of all, a lot harder to access. The minister is saying in fact that the money that you get for the subsidy for the day care spot is actually going to be a loan. It's going to mean a lot of people are not going to be able to access day care services.

I want to point out that when we moved from a system of private day care in Ontario to a publicly funded non-profit system that we did under the NDP government, the Liberal Party was totally in agreement with the Conservatives' present position. I think people need to understand that and need to know what happened there. I remember very well the debates we had in the standing committee and we had here on that particular issue. The Liberals argued with us that we shouldn't move to non-profit and private, that in fact we should leave it in the private sector, and I see very little difference in position between the present Conservative government and the Liberal Party at the time and today.

The other was the whole question of welfare. The government is saying that it wants to break the cycle of dependency on welfare in order to be able to get people off the welfare system and going out to get a job.

First of all, the myth that the government tries to build, and I think a lot of other radical right people try to build in this province, is that people on welfare are all there because they want to be there. That's hogwash. The reality is the vast majority of people, over 90% of people on welfare, are there because of circumstance. They're there because there isn't work in their communities. There is a difficulty in them being able to find work for all kinds of reasons, sometimes having to do with what's happening at home, what's happening to them physically or what's happening generally within the economy.

If you want to get people off welfare, the best way to do that is to try to find programs, such as Jobs Ontario Training that we had put in place, that help the employer

to be able to offset their training costs so they can hire somebody on the welfare system and get them back into the workplace. It's a good way to make it work. Jobs Ontario Training at the time was listed as the most successful jobs creation program to get people off welfare in all of North America. There was an 85% retention rate. That means to say, of all the jobs that were created under Jobs Ontario Training, when the subsidies came off, 85% of those people who got jobs in those programs stayed with the employer with no subsidy. That is pretty darned good.

And you know what? It was a positive measure, the way that I see it, because what it did was it didn't penalize the person on welfare, didn't say to the person on welfare, "You're a lazy bum and you should go out there and work." What it said was: "We recognize there are difficulties. We recognize if we, as a government, take our responsibility and do an investment here in regard to helping you get the training that you need to get a job, you will do so."

And people responded. I can tell you, in my community, as I know across a lot of communities in Ontario generally, people on welfare wanted very much to participate in Jobs Ontario. The only disappointment was that they wished there would have been a lot more jobs being created under Jobs Ontario. As it turns out, I think the number was somewhere around 65,000 or 75,000 people got jobs through Jobs Ontario Training. They would have liked to have seen that number bigger. Well, I agree. I think with time that program was getting to be a lot better and a lot stronger. I think we could have done quite a bit with that.

If the government, in its zeal to balance the budget, would have said, "We want to change welfare in order to be able to get people back to work," the very least it could have done is left Jobs Ontario Training in place until such time that it had a program to replace it and tried to build on what our government had done.

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No. What does this government do? It does what it always does: It manages by crisis, for God's sake. The first thing they did when they came to government was they cancelled Jobs Ontario Training. Why? Because Mike Harris, in opposition with the Conservative Party, like Lyn McLeod in the opposition of the Liberal Party, said they wanted to cancel it. Both the Liberals and Tories didn't like it because it was successful. The Liberals campaigned on cancelling it. They would have cancelled it if they were elected. You guys cancelled it just out of saying that was the right thing to do.

I say that if you didn't like Jobs Ontario Training, the very least you could have done is to say: "We don't like it. We think it's not a good program. We're going to make some changes to make it better. We're going to leave it in place until we come up with a better program, and once we do, we're going to phase out Jobs Ontario Training." No. You cancelled it altogether. On top of that, you cut welfare payments by 22%. So not only did you cut the Jobs Ontario Training program, you penalized people by not even giving them the opportunity to have the amount of money that they need to be able to make ends meet.

As the Housing critic for the NDP caucus, I have met with many people in the housing field. One of the things that really scares me is that I was at a meeting of hospices at Metro Hall about two or three weeks ago here in Toronto, and one of the figures that they told me was that 10 years ago there were maybe 1,500 people who utilized hospices on any one night in the city of Toronto.

A hospice, for people to understand, is a place that you go when you're on the street and you don't have a place to sleep; you go to a hospice, where they'll give you a bed so that you can stay for the night or for a couple of days until you can get yourself organized.

So 10 years ago there were maybe 1,500 people in the system. It took 10 years to get it up to 2,500 people in the system; far too many people, far more than we really need. Do you know how long it took to increase it by another 1,000? Two months.

When you talk to the sheriff's department of the city of Toronto, they're saying economic evictions of people out of their homes who are living in substandard apartments across the city of Toronto has gone up by 65% over the last two or three months, since the time of the welfare cuts.

That's the effect of what you guys are doing. That's what we object to. That's why we, in opposition, are so opposed to what you're doing as a government. That's why you're seeing record numbers of people out in the halls, out in front of the building and protesting this government: because they're saying you have no alternative. This is not about a government wanting to put forward alternatives; this is about a government that is intent on destroying the system and has declared war on those people who don't agree with it.

All of the stuff that you have done up to now is what? It's going after those people who are least able to defend themselves. You've gone after women. You've cut the funding for women's shelters across this province. In fact, you've got the member for London North, who's the minister responsible for women's issues, who says to people in her community, "If you raise an oppositional voice to the Tory Mike Harris government, I will cut your funding." My God. The worst part about that is that she's still in cabinet for having said that. Imagine that, the minister responsible for women's issues.

That is the attitude of this government, and that's really what we're saying. We're saying that you have the right to govern, but you also have a responsibility to make sure that you do it in a responsible way. Is it responsible to tell somebody, because you disagree with them, that you're going to cut their funding? We see that time and time again in a number of situations this government has been involved in. You wonder why people are out on the front lawns of Queen's Park and calling you at your constituency offices and sending you the amount of mail and the petitions that they're sending you. People are saying, "Listen, you've got a right as a government to govern, but for God's sake, you also have a responsibility to the people within the province to make sure that you do so wisely."

This government is not trying to figure out a way to run government better; it doesn't believe in government. That's the point. You don't believe in a publicly funded

system of health care. You don't believe in a publicly funded system of day care. You don't believe in government, period. So you are going about a radical right agenda of being able to get rid of most of the system of government as we know it in favour of no government whatsoever in many areas that we have it now or transferring those programs over to the private sector so a couple of brokers can line their pockets with public-sector dollars, hard-paid tax dollars, so that you can say thanks to your Conservative friends.

Am I cynical? Darned right I'm cynical for what you guys are doing, because you are causing more damage to this province, and it's going to take our government when we're re-elected in the year 2000 or 1999 a lot of work to be able to bring back to Ontario the sanity and the compassion that this province has. I think the thing that you guys are missing is that Ontario has always been a province that has shown compassion and has shown a level-headedness about what it does. We've had governments, yes, in the past that were Conservative, but I would say they were red Tories. They were people who actually had a conscience about what their responsibility was to the people that they represent. This government doesn't have that, and if people are opposing you, it is basically because of that.

We see the police, as we did yesterday or the day before, going out in order to make a line by pushing people back with billy clubs and hitting them over the head and bloodying them to allow a line of MPPs to get in here.

You sit there and say, "Well Jeez, it was the strikers who started it." Why are the strikers out there in the first place? They're out there because you have taken away their basic rights. People of this province, if you're in the private sector, you have the right to successor rights. If I'm working for Dome mines or I'm working for, let's say, Pamour mines, and that mine is sold to another employer, the collective agreement goes with it. If I'm a public sector employee for the government of Ontario, Mike Harris says, "You don't have successor rights." Two different classes of people are what you're creating. Is that fair? Is that right? No.

You say you want to run government the same as you do in the private sector. If you want to do it like the private sector, give the public sector employees what the private sector has got. They'll be happy. They'd be happy if you'd at least do that. It would be an improvement on what you do.

You're saying to public sector employees, "You won't have the right to bump." When you closed down the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs in Matheson the way that you did, if that was to happen at this point after the strike, Pierrette Blok, who worked in that particular office, wouldn't have the right to be able to bump into another office somewhere else within the province and at least protect her ability to have an income to support her family.

No, under the Mike Harris government, employees will lose their right to be able to bump within the OPS. Is that fair? Is that what they do in the private sector?

I can tell you, I've been there. I've negotiated collective agreements on behalf of the United Steelworkers of

America. I've worked with the Ontario Federation of Labour, servicing locals within northeastern Ontario, and every private sector employer that I dealt with, when they went through downsizing, sat down with their employees, sat down with the unions and said, "This is what we want to do," and it was a process by which people bumped once they did the layoffs. You gave the layoff notices. If, let's say, 500 people were gone out of 1,000, basically there was a bumping process they went through that the 500 people at the bottom who would go would be those people with the least amount of seniority. Those people who were close to pensions, you tried to bridge, and you tried to make the layoff a lot easier for people to deal with. No, that's not what this government's doing.

Another thing you're doing is taking away pension rights. You're putting a big, long scoop into the pension funds of the OPS through Bill 26 because, as you wind down the pension with 27,000 people being put out the door, you're making it possible for you, an employer, not to adhere to the laws the private sector has to adhere to when it comes to winding down pensions. What's supposed to happen, because there's a wind-down, is that you take the surplus of that pension and you apply it to bridging so that employees are offered early retirement so that they're able to leave and lessen the impact on the workforce that remains. So instead of 27,000 people being fired, there may be 4,000 or 5,000 people who could retire if you allowed them to have the same pension rights as in the private sector. You wonder why the people of this province are upset with you.

I would just say to the government that yes, you got elected with a majority government. Yes, as a government you have the right to manage and to make decisions. But you must remember that you have a responsibility, with that power, to ensure that what you do is done in a thoughtful way so that you've thought out what your plan is and you figure out where you're going to go.

The problem with what you are doing now is that it's an approach of just basically cutting and allowing the cuts to make things work for you. I say there is no common sense in what you're doing. If anything, it's nonsense. We will be proven right. I will say to you four years down the road that the voters of this province will run you the heck out of this Legislature so fast that your head will spin.

Let me tell you that you will be gone, and this caucus, the Tory caucus of Ontario, will have to share the back seat with the Tory caucus in Ottawa when they hold their caucus convention of the two members in Ottawa and then maybe the one or two who'll be left inside the province of Ontario Legislature. No matter where I go, the people of Ontario are telling me the same thing. It's not a question of the government going too far or too fast; it's a question of the government going in the wrong direction. People will remember that and people will have you out of here so fast you won't know what hit you.

1700

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): Before I actually get on the topic of estimates, which is what I thought we were here to debate, I think some of the comments made by the member who just spoke from the third party need some rebuttal.

As the member well knows, a lot of the rhetoric from the other side just doesn't jibe with the reality of what our government is doing and to make disparaging comments about health in a community that just got joint Timmins—Queen's University psychiatric services that dramatically expand psychiatric services to the point they've never had them before—

Interjection.

Mr Gilchrist: He may benefit, I don't know. Timmins has just received a new MRI. Sudbury has just received a new MRI. Chapleau just got a new hospital.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Order.

Mr Bisson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member well knows that those announcements were announced by our government, not by yours. It's just a repeated announcement.

Mr Gilchrist: That is not true. They were announced about three weeks ago by Minister Wilson and perhaps you'll take credit—

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Gilchrist: It's one thing to make the announcement, it's another thing to actually come up with the money and do the deed. Of course, the \$70-an-hour emergency on-call fee to attract new doctors to the north—perhaps you're going to take credit for that one as well.

It's been very interesting these last couple of days to sit in this House and, as a new member, continue to see how this body functions and to see the difference between those who espouse integrity and those who practise duplicity; those who have honesty as an abiding belief and those who believe that hypocrisy is the way to govern their affairs; those who have principles and that dedication to a cause and those who govern by headline or in reaction to today's polls.

Personally, I side with Chris Stockwell and his comments made two days ago, that this is the seat of government in the province of Ontario and I'm very proud to stand here today and be able to represent the people from Scarborough East and to be able to participate in a democratic debate.

I take great exception to the hypocrisy we've heard in the last couple of days, but the member for Windsor-Riverside in particular, the House leader of the third party who on the day of opening of Parliament back in September went on ad nauseam for at least half an hour about how terrible it was that any member be abridged or impeded in their ability to come into this House—and yet this week he finds it completely appropriate that the members of one particular party are held up for as long as three hours. That sort of hypocrisy has no place in this chamber, Mr Speaker.

On the subject of, shall we say, contradictions, I note the return of the member for Hamilton East and I have here an article from the Hamilton Spectator on February 22 where the member is quoted as saying that he's going to side with the workers, "I will not cross a picket line," he said. 'In effect, we are the only voice they have within the system, but I will not do it against the will of the union.'" The punch-line, "I think anyone from a labour town who crosses a picket line has rocks in their head."

The thing I found interesting is the same day this article came out—

Interjections.

Mr Gilchrist: The day after the article appeared, the member himself was sitting in on the public accounts committee. I leave it to others to decide the integrity that is embodied in those words.

It's indeed a privilege to be offered the opportunity to say a few words about the estimates process. In my short time as a member, I've discovered that perhaps no other aspect of parliamentary procedure is quite as anomalous as the estimates process. Here we are less than two weeks from the end of the fiscal year of the government and yet we're debating the allocation of the funds to be spent in the last year.

Add to that the fact that our discussion revolves around the spending decisions that were announced by the previous government, decisions which were soundly repudiated last June 8 and it would certainly lead one to believe that there's a need for significant reform in our approach to the spending of the taxpayers' money.

I was privileged to sit on the committee hearings for three days. At the outset, I'd like to compliment the ministers who appeared before the committee for their candour, their forthrightness, their honesty, their accessibility and their obvious grasp of the issues facing their respective ministries. When you consider that our government has individual ministries with budgets greater than the total provincial budgets of seven of the provinces of this country, it's nothing short of remarkable the extent to which the ministers of the crown have become expert in their respective fields.

In the few minutes available to me today I want to address the area of the estimates process which was of greatest interest to me and which will arguably have the greatest impact on whether the decisions our government makes in the next few months and years will translate into long-term job creation and retention.

The ministry I'd like to deal with is Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. This ministry deals with a vast range of issues, including science and technology, small business development, international relations, trade policy and of course tourism. In addition, the ministry oversees more than 20 agencies, commissions and crown corporations covering topics as diverse as casinos and historic sites.

Far too often in the past the efforts in this ministry have gone into initiatives that compromised rather than promoted private sector investment and acted contrary to the free market. It's incredibly ironic that the estimates process provides for the "defence" in this case of the budget proposed by the NDP. The premise behind their budget figures for this ministry were not in any way motivated by an abiding belief in entrepreneurship or the free market. This is best illustrated by the NDP move to prop up Ontario Bus Industries. Over a period of two years, the NDP spent or underwrote liabilities to the tune of \$117.6 million.

While all of us in this House agree that job creation is of critical importance, if the free market cannot support the manufacture of buses or more particularly, the buses made by Ontario Bus Industries, there is absolutely no moral or economic justification that can be made for the

intrusive and ill-considered squandering of the taxpayers' hard-earned dollars in this way.

Another example of the use of taxpayer funds under the guise of economic development was the Jobs Ontario Community Action program. Despite lofty objectives, the results fell dramatically short of the projections made by the previous government—only short-term jobs on fixed projects, with an administration that was so sloppy we will likely never have a full accounting of how public funds were spent and the benefits that were derived, if any. It would appear, though, that we would have been better off to have written \$30,000 cheques to those few recipients of Jobs Ontario employment and it would have been much cheaper.

Clearly, it is initiatives—and I use that term loosely—such as these two which contributed to the crushing \$11.2-billion deficit, which was the legacy we inherited from last year's administration, and average \$10-billion deficits for the previous five years. When added to the \$40 billion in debt that the NDP inherited from the Liberals in 1990, this complete ignorance of economic realities of debt have left our once-vibrant province dramatically impaired in its ability to respond to the issues and the challenges of today. The debt has now reached \$100 billion, and as the Minister of Finance has told us on more than one occasion, the province is spending \$1 million more per hour than it's taking in in revenue.

Perhaps there's a silver lining, though, to the profligacy and the wastefulness of the past decade, namely, the raising of public awareness of the need for governments at all levels to regard the spending of tax dollars as a sacred trust, and that at all times governments must operate to the same standards and with the same perspective as the commercial sector or private citizens.

Government spending does not create jobs. It merely redistributes wealth and does nothing to create new wealth. The role of government should be to create a climate for investment and to assist business in the challenge of anticipating new opportunities that will then arise.

As Minister Saunderson noted during his presentation to the estimates committee, the focus of his ministry has changed and will now concentrate on two specific areas of the economy: on sectors and groups of companies which together represent economic engines in Ontario's regions and in the province as a whole; and second, on small to mid-size innovative growth firms, many in the high-tech field, which are leading the transition from an industrial to an information society.

The minister went on to detail the steps he's taken to identify barriers to job creation and the gaps which impede business growth in this province. He noted that his research has extended from the leaders of Ontario's key production sectors to executives of business organizations and tourist authorities, CEOs and staff of financial institutions, and dozens of international investors or would-be investors.

I was particularly pleased that the minister used as an example of successful Ontario companies he has visited Printed Circuits Inc, situated in my home town of Scarborough. Starting with a tiny staff and sales of less than \$0.5 million in 1990, this company has succeeded in

becoming Canada's leading manufacturer of printed waferboards, including those found in Motorola cellular phones. This extraordinary company now has a staff of 200 and sales approaching \$25 million.

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Minister Saunderson also noted the incredible growth of Makeup Art Cosmetics Limited, better known as MAC Cosmetics, here in Toronto. Since 1993, the staff complement has quadrupled to 800 and sales now exceed \$100 million. Better yet, MAC's chief executive, Frank Toskan, forecasts that his company's sales will hit \$1 billion within the next few years without government handouts. This sort of success story demonstrates the latent potential of Ontario entrepreneurs.

Ours is not a province that was built on political patronage and government waste. Rather, it was built by the inspiration, the dedication and the perspiration of millions of people who realized that their labour, their capital and their intelligence were the only tools they needed for personal success.

The minister outlined the steps we will take to break the cycle of corporate welfare dependency that so often guided the spending decisions of his ministry in the past. We're equipping entrepreneurs, companies, industrial sectors and communities with the capabilities for self-reliance and success.

We're encouraging entrepreneurship in many ways. In partnership with the municipalities, the ministry operates 31 self-help offices which, up to December of this fiscal year, had handled approximately 180,000 client inquiries and about 8,000 detailed consultations.

The ministry helps build small business through publications and undertakings such as the joint federal-provincial Canada-Ontario business service centre. We also conducted a series of 390 seminars to more than 8,000 participants as of year-end, and we continue to support student ventures as a means of building entrepreneurial spirit in Ontario.

The bottom line is that the ministry is committed to the principle that any real and lasting economic renewal must come from the private sector. Any attempt by government to do what the private sector does best, which is to create jobs and generate wealth, will be a poor imitation at best.

The good news, as the minister recounted to the committee, is that this positive message is already getting out across the province and around the world.

During the Premier's recent Team Canada visit to India, Pakistan, Indonesia and Malaysia, plus his and the minister's visits to the United States, Europe and Asia, we've seen considerable support for our new mandate and our new vision of the role of government here in Ontario. The international community applauds those moves and we've already seen significant investment announcements which undoubtedly were impacted by the new attitude of this government. In fact, just yesterday the Premier participated in the ground-breaking at Honda, an expanded plant up in Alliston, which will see the creation of 1,200 new, very well-paying jobs in that town.

Even better news is that we're going to be discharging our mandate with a smaller ministry, one that's more efficient and effective and of lower cost to the public that we serve. We're already in the process of reducing the number of divisions in that ministry from seven to four.

The minister recounted in detail the four different divisions: marketing and trade, business development and tourism, strategic analysis sectors and technology division, and corporate services and agency relations. I won't bother to go into detail here, but clearly this is a move in the right direction to streamline the ministry.

The minister stated that we see our primary responsibility as getting the business climate right. Only if we get business going can we create wealth. This means removing impediments to business growth and cutting the red tape that all too often shackles free enterprise.

When our family started a retail business in 1971, we needed approval from three different levels of government to get things up and running. Now a company has to go through about nine levels of bureaucracy before it can get started. We're going to fix that. We've taken many steps; we'll be taking many more. In the meantime, though, there are already signs that this "open for business" attitude has been paying off.

A December report by Dunn and Bradstreet Canada shows businesses in Ontario are optimistic about the future. The optimism index has risen from 53 to 59, an 11.3% gain.

A couple of weeks ago the one millionth personal computer rolled off the Kanata assembly line of Digital Canada, destined in markets for Canada, the United States, Latin America and the Caribbean.

Walt Disney announced plans in December to open animation studios here and in Vancouver.

Toyota in Cambridge will begin producing a new two-door coupe in 1998, a move that will add 1,200 jobs at their plant.

Ford of Canada will be making the 1997 F-series pickup, the redesigned version of North America's best-selling vehicle, at its Oakville plant.

Viceroy Homes has started shipping to Japan by the end of this month and is projecting sales of 1,000 new homes—to Japan, of all places.

I've already mentioned Honda's expansion. That's going to mean a \$300-million investment in the Ontario economy.

Siemens has announced expansion plans for Windsor; Hoechst, Bayer and Cosella-Dorcken are committed to further investments here. We already have had many major investments by the pharmaceutical industry in this province in the last few months.

All these growth indicators have occurred not as a result of corporate handouts, but because of Ontario's improved business climate. In fact, Richard Li, chairman and executive officer of the Pacific Century Group, announced a \$100-million condominium development along Toronto's harbour last month. He acknowledged that his talks with Premier Harris had confirmed "that Ontario is once again a good place to invest." The project will provide 300 construction jobs over the next two years. To quote Mr Li again, "We are certainly encouraged and we hope we can do more in Ontario in the future."

But there are other signs that the business climate is on the mend after the lost decade. As you know, Ontario exports more per capita than any of the G-7 nations. We're the leading exporting province of a leading exporting nation. Exports are our lifeblood. As 1995 drew

to a close, merchandise exports had risen by more than 15.5%, with growth concentrated in areas of industrial goods, machinery, equipment and automobiles.

The contracts arising from the Team Canada mission to Asia included hydro-electric facilities and the joint manufacture and marketing of pharmaceuticals. Many of these opportunities were identified and assisted by one of the crown corporations the ministry oversees, the Ontario International Trade Corp. Incidentally, the OITC, chaired by former Premier William Davis, continues to play a pivotal role in export development by working with small and mid-sized firms to overcome obstacles and expand markets. OITC's private sector board ensures the priorities are right and the standard of service is high.

For the year 1995 as a whole, employment rose by 71,000 jobs. Primary growth, I'm pleased to say, occurred in the private sector—where it should be growing—where employment rose by 116,000 jobs. As might be expected, considering the downsizing commitments by the provincial and federal governments, employment fell in the public sector by 45,000 jobs. This graphically demonstrates, I suspect, that we are going through a period of transition, one in which long-term sustainable jobs will be increasingly found in the private sector, not in the public. It's not an easy transition by any means. We only need reflect on the current public sector labour difficulties in Ontario to appreciate the personal and professional impact of this change.

In the Ministry of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism they're adopting a whole new approach to economic development. They're undoing the damage done over the last decade. They're committed to further significant improvement of the business climate. The growth will not occur overnight, but we're encouraged by the signs of growing confidence in Ontario by domestic and international investors.

We've listened to the business community at home and abroad and we're doing what we said we would do. We are vigorously attacking the deficit. We are reducing the size and intrusive nature of government. We are tearing down barriers to business, cutting red tape, stimulating consumer confidence and, in seven weeks, announcing the tax cut that will put a lot more money back in the pockets of consumers. The creation of jobs that will result from that will make even this 71,000 figure pale by comparison.

We're developing ways for individuals, communities and companies to achieve self-reliance. Within a day's drive of 120 million consumers, Ontario is the third-largest trading partner of the United States. Only Canada as a whole and Japan rank higher, with trade in 1993 totalling \$116 billion. Ontario's GDP was about \$303 billion last year, or 40% of Canada's total.

So we have to keep the big picture in mind. To local, national and international investors, we offer a stable political climate—the events of Monday notwithstanding—one of the best medical systems in the world and a province that is diverse, clean, safe and sophisticated. We have the brainpower and the resources to compete with the best in the world.

As Ontario's lead trade promotion agency, this ministry offers a range of programs and services, from basic export education and consulting, all the way to the

development of consortia for international projects. It's involved in the marketing of SkyDome technology in Europe, airport construction in Indonesia, transportation and environmental projects in Latin America and even energy projects in China. In February, only eight months into our mandate, Ontario recorded a staggering increase of 31,000 jobs, the greatest February increase in 15 years. Since October 1995 we've gained 76,000 jobs, bringing the number of employed people in this province to its highest level since early 1990. In effect, we've undone the last five years; now we're just working on the previous five. Overall employment is projected to rise by 1.5% this year and 1.9% in 1997.

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Much to the chagrin of those who would spout rhetoric instead of facing the facts, our strategy is clearly working. Our plan is to get Ontario working again by committing to real jobs in the private sector. This commitment is bearing fruit, and for those who doubt it, I challenge them to speak to the workers, the new employees of Digital, Honda, Viceroy, Toyota or Ford. They can attest to the benefits of a government that does more than hand out patronage grants and instead has a concrete, business-like plan to get value added jobs to the province of Ontario.

In short, the overriding conclusion that I reached after participating in the estimates process is that the spending habits of our predecessors were in no way in tune with the wishes of the electorate. The voters had tired of the talk, they had grown weary of governments that acted like they were immune to the economic realities that govern the real world, and they had become sophisticated about the significance of the crushing debt load left by the last two governments.

The estimates process forces the review of last year's profligate budget announcements by the NDP, and while the passing of the estimates is a necessary part of the budget process, no one—and I mean no one—in this province should be deluded into thinking that I or any other member of this government approves in any way the principles and the philosophy which were the inspiration for that NDP budget.

On that note, Mr Speaker, I'd like to end. Thank you for the opportunity to make these brief comments and to encourage the members opposite that perhaps there is a greater need than political opportunism that faces them. Perhaps there's a need to participate with us, to read Hansard before you make your inappropriate comments about the behaviour this week. I'd suggest that by working together we can make sure that the business plan we've brought forward, the business plan that the voters of this province endorsed last June 8, will be successful and that we will see the creation of those 725,000 jobs, we'll see a tax cut that stimulates growth, and we'll see this province become the engine that once again pulls Canada out of the morass we find it in today.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): First of all, let me address the comments by the member for Scarborough East. I appreciate keeping in touch with the fine Hamilton Spectator, the comments I've made. Let me remind the member that I made it very clear, as I have from day one of the strike, that I will stand with the strikers and I will stand with the OPSEU workers, and

that I would not cross a picket line unless it was with the concurrence of the OPSEU workers.

I'd like to remind the member that I did not need a police escort to get into the House. I didn't need the riot squad to break heads and bash knees to get me into the House. I didn't hide in my office the night before in order to get into the House. I walked on the picket line with the members, the members you have abused, the members you sent the riot squad after, the men and women who work for you. They're not some evil empire from another world. They are your workers.

The Deputy Speaker: I'd remind the member to address this to me.

Mr Agostino: Mr Speaker, they are the workers of this government. They are not the enemy, as this government likes to treat them. They're men and women, many who have never been on a picket line before, many who have never been through a strike before. They're not radical militants. They're men and women who are trying to make a living, pay their bills, and hang on to their jobs. If it is wrong to stand by men and women who are trying to pay their bills and hang on to their jobs, I can tell you, I'm proud to stand shoulder to shoulder with the OPSEU workers, and I'll continue to stand with them until they get the fairness and the justice that this government is denying them.

In regard to what we are talking about here today in the estimates, the concern I have is, first of all, the depth and the speed with which the cuts this government is making are taking place. They keep talking of the 10 lost years. Let me remind my friends across the floor that, not according to our documents but according to Ernie Eves's economic statement in November, the last balanced budget in the last 30 years in this province came in 1989 under a Liberal government. That was part of those 10 lost years. Ernie Eves has acknowledged that in his November statement. I would ask some of the Tory backbenchers who haven't seen that statement yet to read the statement from November and they will understand this.

What this government is doing is proceeding in a manner that will hurt Ontario. No one doubts the need for cuts. I think we all understand, whether we were going to be the government of the day or the NDP, that there would have been some difficult decisions and the cuts would have had to be made. But it is the question of the depth and the speed of the cuts and the people that these cuts are hurting that is concerning to many of us across Ontario.

The cuts that this government is making are driven by the fact that you have committed to an unrealistic, wacky tax cut that you cannot deliver and at the same time try to maintain essential services across Ontario. You're adding \$5 billion to \$6 billion a year to the depth of the cuts by giving a tax cut to people who are well off across this province. The biggest beneficiary of your tax cut will be the wealthy across Ontario.

You are hurting kids in order to give a tax cut to the wealthy. You've decided to cut welfare benefits. You have decided that you're going to cut welfare benefits by over 21%. Do you realize that when you cut those welfare benefits, you have also cut the benefits of 400,000 children who through no fault of their own are

relying on welfare in this province? Can one of the members on the Tory side of the House explain to me what fault those kids have for the situation they're in? Explain to me why those children need and deserve to suffer as a result of a government cut of 21% in welfare benefits. Can someone explain that?

Can someone explain to the disabled in Ontario that you promised you were not going to affect? Can you explain to those disabled people that you said you were going to protect their income and that you were not going to cut their benefits? The thousands of disabled who are still on welfare that you have not moved to family benefits and who have suffered a 21% cut in their benefits: Can you explain to those people why the tax cut is a good idea? Can you explain to the senior citizens, who you have put user fees on their medication, why the tax cut is a good idea?

Tax cuts should only be considered once we've achieved a balanced budget, once we have come to grips with the deficit, but to try to do it at the same time—

Interjection.

Mr Agostino: I know for my friends back there the highlight of their day is to heckle because they have nothing else to do in their Tory caucus, but if they would just listen for a second and understand the fact that the tax cut will benefit only the wealthiest and that this tax cut would only make sense once you have balanced the budget. You don't seem to understand that the people you're hurting in Ontario are the most vulnerable, that the people you're hurting in Ontario are the most defenceless, that the people you're hurting in Ontario are ones who can least afford the cut that you're making to their benefits.

This government ran on something called the Common Sense Revolution. This revolution stated, "We will not cut health care spending." Do you want to tell that to the people of St Joseph's Hospital in Hamilton? Do you want to tell that to the people of St Peter's Hospital in Hamilton, that you're not going to cut their spending? Do you want to tell them that? Maybe it's just their imagination that their hospital is going to close; the 200 layoffs at the Civic, that they're imagining that. Tell them that health care spending will not be cut.

Tell the teachers and the students—and I quote your Common Sense Revolution—"Classroom funding for education will be guaranteed." Tell the hundreds of teachers who are going to lose their jobs across Ontario that you've kept your promise and that you've guaranteed their funding.

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Let's talk about policing. "Funding for law enforcement and justice will be guaranteed." Tell that to the municipalities, when you've cut their funding by 40%. They will be forced to cut police budgets and downsize police forces. Tell that to the police officer who came forward to the Bill 26 hearings, that you've guaranteed funding for policing. Somehow, they don't believe you.

"Aid for seniors and the disabled will not be cut." Tell that to the 14,000 disabled and seniors who are still receiving welfare benefits eight months after you came to power on a promise that you would move those individuals on to the family benefits package, where they would receive an additional \$400 more than they receive right

now. Tell them that they're imagining this cut, that the \$400 less they're getting in their cheque is not real, that it's just something they're imagining because this government said they were not going to cut those benefits.

What we have seen is a litany of broken promises. In my own community of Hamilton, which elected four government members, let me just give you an indication of the casualty list as a result of government cuts.

In the city of Hamilton, at least 58 city of Hamilton employees will be set to lose their jobs as a result of funding cuts; \$1 million in new user fees as a result of government cuts; \$2.89 million in transfer cuts in 1996-97. McMaster University: 750 positions to be eliminated, \$18 million in cuts in 1996-97 as a result of this government. The civic hospitals: 400 Hamilton General and Henderson hospital employees have received layoff notices; \$14.6 million in funding cut to the Hamilton civic hospitals.

The Hamilton board of education: \$25.4 million cut. Some 228 elementary teachers and 209 secondary teachers have been given layoff notices as a result of your cut. But this, according to this government, is not going to impact classroom education. For the Hamilton separate school board, 200 layoff notices for board employees; \$7.5 million in cuts. Wentworth county school board, 100 school board layoff notices; \$3.8 million in cuts. In the region of Hamilton-Wentworth, 400 employees have been given layoff notices; \$16 million in cuts. St Joseph's Hospital, a hospital with over 100 years of history, run by the Sisters of St Joseph in the city of Hamilton, slated for closure; \$7 million in cuts. St Peter's Hospital: job loss of 200; \$540,000 in cuts. Chedoke-McMaster Hospitals, \$4.5 million; 400 early retirement packages. Joe Brant in Burlington, 300 job losses; \$2.7 million.

This government ran on full funding for the expressway. Full funding means one thing before an election and something different after an election. The four Tory members—I know they're embarrassed at what this government has done. I know they have a tough time going back to their constituents and saying—because they mean well; I believe the four Tory members in the Hamilton area are men and women of integrity and will do their best for their constituents. However, the difficulty they have is they now have to go back to their electorate and say to them: "Remember we made the promise to you on the expressway? Remember when the Premier said we're going to fund the full six-lane expressway and that was going to be up to \$182 million? Well, we really didn't mean it and the Premier didn't mean it, because we're only going to give you \$100 million." So at least by regional estimates we're talking about a \$50-million shortfall.

I am pleased today that the Minister of Transportation—and I don't think he realized what he did—agreed to a third-party independent review of the funding, and if the funding verifies the regional figures to be correct of \$150 million, I fully expect this government to meet that commitment and I certainly expect the local government members to push this government to meet the full commitment of \$150 million, because the expressway is essential to Hamilton, it's essential to the economy, and I can tell you that there will be a political price to be

paid by this government if it does not come through with the full funding for the expressway.

The Premier talked about health care on May 3, 1994: "It's all in the book. It's in the plan. We say very clearly that health care spending is a priority. Not one cent will be cut from health care." Let me tell you, the commitments made during the election were bought by the people of Ontario. They believed this government was going to honour its promise not to cut health care.

The Harris government's cuts to Hamilton hospitals will devastate the delivery of health care systems and kill jobs in the region. It is a brutal betrayal of the people of Hamilton-Wentworth. It is government by meat cleaver. It is an agenda for pain without gain. There's pain for sick people, who will have to wait longer—waiting lists for treatments. There's pain for hospital workers who are going to lose their jobs. There will be pain for ordinary Ontarians and ordinary Hamiltonians who'll have to live with a fractured health care system thrown into financial crisis due to cuts imposed by a government that is obsessed with giving a 30% tax cut to the wealthiest across this province.

Hamilton-Wentworth suffered \$27 million in health care cuts as a result of the last round announced by the Health minister. This is one hell of a price to pay for tax cuts that will benefit individuals making \$150,000 by \$5,000 per year. It is one hell of a price to pay for people in my region and people across Ontario.

Recently, the Hamilton health task force announced its recommendations, and I want to go back to St Joseph's Hospital, because it is indicative of a government that has forced local communities to look at options that are unthinkable as a result of the depth of the cuts. St Joseph's is a vital component of a health care system that services thousands of sick and frail every day in Hamilton-Wentworth. Unfortunately, in 1996 the frail and the sick are perfect targets for the Mike Harris cuts, health care cuts you've imposed as a result of a tax cut that is going to be paid by the sick across Ontario.

If the whiz-kids and the advisers in the Premier's office would get out of their Queen's Park tower and visit real people in hospital beds across Hamilton, St Joseph's would not be recommended for closure. If we could get these individuals to read the hundreds of letters or take one of the hundreds of calls I've received in my office regarding the fear people have as a result of the recommendation to close St Joseph's, it wouldn't be slated. If you attended a function like the town hall meeting organized by the MPP for St Joseph's Hospital, Hamilton Centre, Dave Christopherson, and spoke to one of the more than 600 people who went to the meeting and spoke about the impact it would have on their lives if you closed the hospital, it wouldn't be on the chopping block. If Mike Harris truly meant what he said when he said that not one cent would be cut from health care, then St Joseph's would not be slated for closure.

It is a brutal, blatant betrayal by this government.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): Nonsense.

Mr Agostino: The Minister of Health likes to say, "Nonsense." The minister likes to say it is nonsense. I ask the minister again to talk to the hundreds of hospital workers who are going to lose their jobs and tell them

how you have not cut health care spending across Ontario.

Tell the individuals at St Joseph's Hospital that you're not going to cut their funding. Tell the hundreds of people at St Joseph's who are going to lose their jobs as a result of your decisions that you have not cut health care funding. Tell St Peter's Hospital that you're not going to cut their funding. Tell them that the \$27 million that has been cut out of Hamilton has not been cut.

It is a brutal, unequivocal betrayal. This government does not understand that promises made should be promises kept. It is the most blatant betrayal, and you will learn very quickly that people in Ontario will not forgive you or forget that you have cut and devastated their health care system. Today you can sit there and laugh and say, "It's only a hospital in Hamilton," but tomorrow it may be a hospital in your riding and right across this province, anywhere across this province.

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Realize that when you touch health care you're affecting the elderly, the frail people in this province who have always believed they should have full access and there should always be full access to health care across Ontario and that your ability to receive good health care should not be based on your ability to pay, and this government is moving away from that commitment.

This government is also obsessed with destroying the civil service across Ontario. This government believes that the private sector should basically run everything and the government should just get out of the way. This government believes that you help the economy by forcing tens of thousands of layoffs.

Maybe you can explain to me how we're going to benefit across Ontario when my community will lose thousands of jobs as a result of your cuts. Maybe you can tell me how this province is going to benefit when up to 27,000 civil servants will lose their jobs. You tell me how that's going to help the economic spinoff. You tell me how that is going to help people across Ontario, when 27,000 individuals will not get a paycheque at the end of the week and will not be able to pay their mortgage, pay their bills. How is that going to benefit Ontario? How is that going to benefit this province?

There's a rational way of downsizing the workforce in Ontario if that's necessary. There's a slow gradual way of doing it, but this government again doesn't understand that, because this government feels that it has to immediately implement this absurd, wacky tax cut that you made during the election. You realized the tax cut was not doable. You knew that going into the campaign, but you were going to promise that. You were going to promise because you thought it would help you get elected and that it was going to be a tax cut without pain and that no one was going to suffer. Well, I can tell you, many people across Ontario are suffering every single day as a result of your obsession with this 30% tax cut.

What I would say to this government is to abandon your tax cut proposal. What I would say to this government is to hold back and consult with people, talk to people across Ontario whom you're affecting. Yes, there are programs that maybe don't work. Yes, there are programs that maybe need to be reviewed, but you must

look at programs individually and you must make individual assessments of the value of those programs and the impact of getting rid of those programs. But when you blindly cut and slash everything that moves, that process doesn't take place, that process cannot take place when you blindly cut across the board.

You're hurting people across Ontario. You're hurting average working men and women across Ontario. You're not hurting the wealthy, because if you look at the cuts—sit back and assess the cuts that you've made and look at who is going to pay the greatest price.

Let's look at the average steelworker in my community. Let's look at the average steelworker who may get \$500, \$600 as a result of Mike Harris's tax cut. That average steelworker, he or she has a son or daughter at McMaster University in Hamilton next year. They will pay at least \$600 more in tuition fees. If you have a son or daughter at McMaster, you will pay at least \$600 more.

In Hamilton, you will pay more for recreation centres. You will pay more money to go to the skating arena. You will pay more money to get rid of your garbage at the waste disposal plant. You will pay more money for water and sewer rates. You will pay more educational dollars. You will have less health care. That is the reality and the tradeoff. I can tell you that the people I represent do not want this tax cut and have to on the other hand pay the additional costs that you're imposing upon them.

That 30% tax cut, that \$500 or \$600 that the average steelworker in my community will benefit as a result of your full tax cut is not worth the tens of thousands of jobs that you're going to give up. Their friends and neighbours are going to be out of work as a result of your policies.

It is not worth the closure of a Hamilton hospital. It is not worth the millions of dollars you've cut in education. It is not worth the price that many working men and women have to pay. It is not worth the price that seniors and disabled across Ontario have to pay. It is not worth the price that the senior citizen in my riding who's barely getting by now has to face, whether it's in health care cuts or the longer lineups they have to wait or whether it's the user fees that you have now put on their medication.

How's that senior citizen going to benefit from your tax cut? How's the laid-off civil servant going to benefit from your tax cut? How's the laid-off hospital worker going to benefit from your tax cut? How's the laid-off worker at Mohawk College or McMaster University in Hamilton going to benefit from the Mike Harris agenda and the Mike Harris revolution?

I can tell you that the price this province will pay as a result of the drive and the obsession this government has to give this tax cut at all cost is a price that we're going to live to regret. It's a price that is going to take us years to recover from. We have seen the experience of American states, we have seen the experience of Ronald Reagan, we have seen the impact of the trickle-down economy and how that's supposed to work, that somehow all this money is going to get reinvested and is going to create all these hundreds of thousands of jobs. We've seen those experiences become a miserable failure. We

have seen the experience in New Jersey, a campaign that you copied and followed and are continuing to follow to a T, because you like Republicans, you like the way Newt Gingrich and Jesse Helms operate in the United States.

We have seen that agenda at work, but what I can ask you to do or hope that you do is bring Ontario back to the moderate province that it used to be. It is a caring and compassionate province of people who realize we have to look after each other, people who realize that government has a responsibility to take care of the neediest and the weakest and the most vulnerable. That is the province I grew up in, that is the province I learned to love and believe in, and that is the province I'm afraid we're losing.

When I see scenes such as I saw Monday where government employees are being attacked by their own government, there is something wrong with this province. When people who are outside and have a legal right to strike and are employees of this government get bashed and whacked and pushed, there is something wrong with the way we're operating this province.

This is not a Conservative government that Bill Davis would have been proud of. This is not a Conservative government that past premiers who ran under the Conservative banner would have been proud of. This is a radical government. Do you know what the sad part is? That I know that most of these backbenchers don't believe what is happening, because the agenda is not being driven by the backbenchers. The agenda is being driven by the Premier's office and a couple of his key whiz kids who are paid to advise him.

I ask the backbenchers to talk to your constituents. Talk to the senior citizens, talk to disabled individuals, talk to the people who are going to lose their jobs in your own constituencies. Don't believe what I have to say, or the other opposition members. Talk to the laid-off workers in your own riding, talk to the school boards in your riding, talk to the municipal employees in your riding and see what they have to tell you.

I urge this government to reconsider what it's doing and realize that Ontario is not willing to pay the price and the pain of a 30% tax cut.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed on concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Education and Training, including supplementaries? Agreed.

Is it agreed for concurrences in supply for the Ministry of Community and Social Services?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

These estimates are concurred in.

Is it agreed for concurrences in supply for the Ministry of Housing?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

These estimates are concurred in.

Is it agreed for concurrences in supply for the Ministry of Transportation, including supplementaries?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

These estimates are concurred in.

Is it agreed for concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Health, including supplementaries?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

These estimates are concurred in.

Is it agreed for concurrence in supply for the Ministry of Economic Development and Trade? Agreed.

1750

ADVOCACY, CONSENT
AND SUBSTITUTE DECISIONS
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1995
LOI DE 1995 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'INTERVENTION,
LE CONSENTEMENT ET LA PRISE
DE DÉCISIONS AU NOM D'AUTRUI

Mr Tilson moved, on behalf of Mr Harnick, third reading of the following bill:

Bill 19, An Act to repeal the Advocacy Act, 1992, revise the Consent to Treatment Act, 1992, amend the Substitute Decisions Act, 1992 and amend other Acts in respect of related matters / *Projet de loi 19, Loi abrogeant la Loi de 1992 sur l'intervention, révisant la Loi de 1992 sur le consentement au traitement, modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur la prise de décisions au nom d'autrui et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui concerne des questions connexes.*

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): It gives me great pleasure, on behalf of the Attorney General, to begin the debate on third reading of Bill 19, the Advocacy, Consent and Substitute Decisions Statute Law Amendment Act. This bill has just gone through considerable hearings with respect to the standing committee on administration of justice, basically the last four weeks, of which three were with respect to hearing delegations from around this province and here in Toronto, and one week on clause-by-clause.

This topic of substitute decision and advocacy legislation and consent to treatment, in my view, has been dealt with by this House, through two sets of government, more than any other piece of legislation that I've seen, certainly. The Advocacy Act, the Consent to Treatment Act and the Substitute Decisions Act went through months and months of public hearings in 1992. In fact, we went through two sets of hearings. Hundreds of people and groups made submissions and hundreds more wrote the government of the day.

The development of Bill 19, the bill that's before the House on third reading, followed almost three years of the public and service providers telling us what they thought of these pieces of legislation. Proclamation of these laws by the former NDP government uncovered more practical difficulties for the public.

Every member of this Legislature, certainly those here through re-election, has had letters and telephone calls from citizens who felt that the requirements and legal complexities of the current law are unwarranted. Many of us held hearings in our own ridings and listened to the

people on what they felt about these specific pieces of legislation. During the development of Bill 19, we also knew very clearly what the positions of the various interest groups were, and they were consulted regularly and extensively while plans for implementing the original acts were being developed.

It does give me great pleasure to start off the debate with respect to this piece of legislation. This law, we believe, will reduce government intervention in the private affairs of Ontarians and restore decision-making to the hands of individuals and their families. We believe that in the former legislation there was too much government interference and that what was needed from the consultations we had was more decision-making to be made by the members of the families of the people of this province.

This new bill will repeal the Advocacy Act, will eliminate the Advocacy Commission, reduce government intrusion in private lives and save \$18 million per year. This repeal will further alleviate much confusion in the health care profession. It will replace the Consent to Treatment Act with the Health Care Consent Act, eliminating bureaucratic red tape and complicated rules that can delay treatment for mentally incapable people.

I will restrict my comments to the substitute decisions part of the bill, the power of attorney, as it were. Other members of the government side will speak on the repeal of the advocacy legislation and the introduction of the Health Care Consent Act.

The bill amends the Substitute Decisions Act to simplify the rules for substitute decision-making for mentally incapable people. Other members of our caucus will be speaking to the other parts of the bill.

Perhaps I might start off by indicating why we are amending the Substitute Decisions Act. We believe that the law prior to the Substitute Decisions Act was filled with gaps and inconsistencies. For example, there was no way for families to get legal authority to make financial decisions for their mentally incapable loved ones who had not made powers of attorney. In those situations, families would always have to go to court.

Currently, there are procedures that exist in the Substitute Decisions Act that allow people who are affected to challenge or appeal the appointment of a guardian. At present, before this act takes place, the legislation requires that information about legal rights be given in a personal visit from an independent advocate acting on behalf of the Advocacy Commission. It was this one act, I can say from my personal experience, that received more criticism; that when individuals took the time to appoint an attorney, an advocate could come and overrule the wishes and interfere in the wishes of an attorney who had been appointed by an incapable person at a time they were capable. That intrusion, we found, from talking to

group after group and individual after individual around this province, was simply unacceptable.

We believe the current act goes too far and creates overly complicated rules and procedures that confused many people. In some cases, government could interfere in people's private affairs even when they had made powers of attorney. In the past two years, thousands of Ontarians have expressed concern about the complexity of the rules and the potential for government interference into people's private lives. Our government has listened to these concerns and we have made changes to simplify the rules.

With respect to the Substitute Decisions Act amendments, we believe that the changes to the Substitute Decisions Act will reduce barriers to family members and friends who look after incapable loved ones. We believe those are the people who should be taking care of our loved ones who are incapable, not the province of Ontario or not some government agency. We believe we should look after our own.

The amendments, we believe, will simplify and streamline procedures. The amendments reflect this government's belief that most caregivers, service providers and family members have the best interests of the mentally incapable people they care for at heart. These changes are about providing rules that will work for everyone, whose situations are all unique. That's another issue we look at. Everyone is different, everyone has different problems and everyone's different problems can be solved by each individual's families. The rules under the amendments will be less rigid and will allow greater flexibility for dealing with situations in humane ways.

Turning to the powers of attorney, I know that after the former government introduced this piece of legislation, hundreds and hundreds of people around this province signed powers of attorney and many have expressed a concern to all of us on all sides of the House whether these powers of attorney will still be valid. The answer is yes, that existing powers of attorney will not be invalidated by these amendments. No one who has already made a valid power of attorney will need to make a new one as a result of the amendments.

Statutory guardianship: Relatives of mentally incapable people will be able to become statutory guardians more easily. Previously, only immediate family, such as a spouse, sibling or child, could apply to be a statutory guardian. Under the new law, any relative will be able to apply. For example, many elderly people do not have any immediate family, but may, however, have an extension to the family, whether it be a daughter-in-law or a son-in-law or a nephew, who will be able to become involved in making decisions for them.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): It being almost 6 of the clock, I would adjourn this House until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1800.

ERRATUM

| No. | Page | Column | Line | Should read: |
|-----|------|--------|------|--|
| 43 | 1730 | 1 | 40 | province. Mr McLeman was only investigating some |

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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No. 45

N° 45

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Thursday 21 March 1996

Jeudi 21 mars 1996



Speaker
Honourable Allan K. McLean

Président
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 21 March 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 21 mars 1996

*The House met at 1332.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HIGHWAY 69

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): I rise today to remind a few of my colleagues across the way of a very important commitment that is not being kept by the government. On January 22, I received notification that the ongoing planning stage of the four-laning of Highway 69 into Sudbury was to be cancelled. This vital link is fundamental to the economic wellbeing of Sudbury and the north. I would like to take this opportunity to remind the Minister of Transportation of a few previous statements made by our Premier regarding the expansion of highways to the north. I quote:

"I think it's crucial that four-laning proceed. I have said on many occasions that the four-laning project ought not to be considered only on the amount of vehicles, but that it should be looked at by the provincial government as an economic tool for the promotion of economic development, tourism and the way of life in northern Ontario."

Let me give you another quote from Mr Harris while on the campaign trail, regarding the four-laning of Highway 11, which goes into North Bay from Toronto: "My party has made a commitment that it should proceed as soon as possible and that work continue until that project can be completed."

What about Highway 69, Mr Premier? Lives continue to be lost at an alarming rate on this highway. To kill the inexpensive planning stage would be to put off construction for several years and to continue the carnage we see all too frequently on Highway 69.

The people of Sudbury have spoken loudly and clearly through a resolution of Sudbury regional council demanding a safe and viable link to the north that will ensure a vibrant economy.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): The members of OPSEU Local 639 are holding a solidarity march on Saturday, March 23, at 2 pm in Kapuskasing, in the riding of Cochrane North. OPSEU 639 has asked that I extend an invitation to all interested members of the Legislature to march with them through the streets of Kapuskasing to protest the direct attack by the Harris government on their union and all unions and unionized workers, and the Tory government's agenda of cutting health care, social and education services as well as trying to dismantle all the unions in this province.

The march will start and end at the rear parking lot of the Model City Mall in Kapuskasing. Come out and join me and the unionized citizens of Kapuskasing in a solidarity march. Everyone is welcome. I might point out, Mr Harris, please leave your Tory OPP goons at home. We don't need them up in Cochrane North.

Local 639 is pleased that we've had solidarity marches in Hearst, Cochrane, Timmins and all throughout the ridings of Cochrane North and Cochrane South. They're fed up with the Tory agenda of attacking people steadily, steadily, steadily. We want an end to it. They've given over 500 pink slips from Cochrane North that they think Mike Harris should be replaced, he should be fired, as he's doing with a lot of other workers in this province.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Ms Isabel Bassett (St Andrew-St Patrick): In these days of funding cutbacks and looking for innovative ways of delivering services, I'd like to share with you some exciting projects. The faculty of applied science and engineering at the University of Toronto, in my riding of St Andrew-St Patrick, has teamed up with the engineering departments of McMaster University and the University of Waterloo to develop a new electronic classroom networking system which allows teaching resources to be shared among the three faculties. Electronic links have also been made with other Canadian universities. In fact, just last week a PhD oral examination was conducted over the network between a student in Ottawa and a judge in Toronto.

The faculty of applied science and engineering has also introduced a new program called the professional experience year which allows undergraduate students at the University of Toronto to take a year's leave from their engineering studies to get some work and valued experience in industry. This program helps give students the practical work they need and makes them more competitive in a tight job market once they graduate. There are 170 students registered in this program already.

This is an excellent demonstration of how at least one university is becoming more innovative and entrepreneurial and how universities can work together to achieve greater results. Partnership and innovation are the cornerstones of our future.

ST JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Recently the health care task force in Hamilton announced its recommendation to close St Joseph's Hospital in Hamilton. St Joseph's Hospital is a vital component of the Hamilton health care system that services thousands of sick and frail every day. Unfortunately, in 1996 the sick and the frail are perfect targets for Mike Harris and the Tories.

St Joseph's has been operated since 1890 by the Sisters of St Joseph. It is one of the top health care facilities in the region. Last year alone, it served 350,000 people. Sixty per cent of the St Joseph's Hospital site is less than six years old, with over \$100 million in redevelopment in the building itself.

However, Hamilton is fighting back. Hamilton's not going to roll over and allow this government or the district health council to recommend a closure of St Joseph's. Our MPPs' offices are receiving hundreds of phone calls and letters every day. A town hall meeting organized by Hamilton Centre MPP David Christopherson attracted over 600 people, with a few days' notice, all expressing opposition to the cuts.

We urge the minister to join with the hundreds of thousands of Hamilton-Wentworth residents who are going to express and continue to express disgust at this recommendation. We urge the minister to commit to the House that he will recommend that any moves whatsoever by the district health council to close St Joseph's be denied and that he assure the people of Hamilton today that he will not accept those recommendations.

We'll keep fighting and we'll keep ensuring that St Joseph's remains open.

1340

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE DISPUTE

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): The Sudbury Star newspaper recently commissioned a public opinion survey in our community regarding the OPSEU strike. The question asked of respondents was, "Do you support the Ontario government or its striking public service employees in the current labour dispute?" The survey results showed 43% of those questioned support the workers, those delivering important public services in our community. Only 29% of those asked were prepared to back the Conservative government on this issue.

That strong support for OPSEU was also clearly demonstrated last Friday during a march and rally held in downtown Sudbury. Over 1,500 people came out to protest the Conservative government and to demand a just and fair settlement for Ontario public sector workers.

In our community, workers in the public and private sector understand the importance of key workplace issues like seniority, pensions and successor rights. Working men and working women in my community have fought long and hard to realize those gains. They know full well that once OPSEU workers are stripped of these fundamental rights, the Conservatives will move on to the next group of workers: health care workers next week, steelworkers the week after, teachers after that, and on and on.

The Mike Harris government doesn't care that it's discriminating against its own workers. It doesn't care that it's stripping away protections that other Tory governments have put in place. It doesn't care that once you lay off thousands and thousands of workers, you destroy important public services. The only thing Mike Harris cares about is to drag labour legislation and worker protection down—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member's time has expired.

CHARLES SAURIOL

Mr John L. Parker (York East): Last December, the borough of East York lost one of its leading citizens, and conservationists across Ontario lost one of their best friends when Charles Sauriol died at the age of 91.

Charles Sauriol dedicated the second half of his remarkable life to the cause of conservation. He was central to efforts which raised more than \$20 million in support of this important cause. He spearheaded the protection of thousands of acres of heritage lands across Canada, including over 500 natural areas within this province.

He was also the author of several books on the subject of conservation and was at work on another one literally at the moment of his death.

His work earned him many awards, including the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario Conservation Award and the Order of Canada.

Charles Sauriol devoted unparalleled energy to his passion for restoration and conservation of the natural environment. He focused particular efforts towards conservation in the Don River watershed, which includes much of Metropolitan Toronto and all of East York and which has been part of my life since my earliest days growing up in this community. To Charles, the Don River Valley was one of nature's corridors, deserving of respect and protection, the importance of which only increased as the concrete and asphalt of urban development grew around it.

I met Charles Sauriol at Todmorden Mills in East York when we both participated in marking the establishment of a man-made natural pond site in an area where runoff waters feed into the lower Don. Later this spring, I will be joining many others who will paddle the lower Don past this site into Lake Ontario. I will be thinking of Charles Sauriol with each paddle stroke. As I look at the valley about me, I know I will be witnessing both a monument to the life's work of Charles Sauriol and the challenge of the unfinished work that he left behind for the rest of us to continue.

HEALTH SERVICES RESTRUCTURING COMMISSION

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): In the absence of a minister's statement and with a simple press release only, I'd like to talk about the new Health Services Restructuring Commission which was created under the government's now infamous Bill 26, the omnibus bill.

In the absence of a ministerial statement on the appointment of the CEO, Mr Mark Rochon, I would like to say to the minister that his approach is unacceptable. He says, "The mandate of the restructuring commission is to make decisions on implementation of hospital restructuring and consider more generally restructuring of the health care system."

The commission will have the power to close or amalgamate hospitals. There's no requirement for consultation or participation of the district health councils or in fact with the communities they represent. Any individual member of this commission could have the power to go into any community and impose solutions.

The minister says in his press release that the commission "will function at arm's length from the government and will keep the minister...informed." Yet Mark Rochon, who is the CEO, was a former assistant deputy minister at the Ministry of Health and the press release also says, "...the Ministry of Health with which the commission will be working closely in the discharge of its mandate." I say to the minister, you can't have it both ways. You must take responsibility—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member's time has expired.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE DISPUTE

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): With the OPSEU strike nearing the end of its fourth week and with the events of Monday still fresh in our minds, I think it's important for us to reflect back on some of the events leading into and during the strike.

We saw back this fall the actions of this government through Bill 26 to take away pension rights of public servants in this province. We saw them, secondly, crank up threats of layoffs from the 13,000 that they promised during the election to up to 27,000 that was leaked out several weeks ago. We saw them next put out an offer just before the strike vote, trying to simply buy off those employees who would survive those layoffs, and we saw that that strategy didn't work and that the union indeed got a strong level of support for the strike vote they took.

During the strike the government's intimidation tactics continued. They tried to undermine the union by attempting to broaden the use of essential services workers. Again, this tactic and others they used didn't work. This Monday we saw the ultimate in intimidation, in a very sad day, not just in the strike but in the governance of this province.

I say to this government, if they are serious about arriving at any sense of peace in this province, to get to the bargaining table and to resolve the outstanding issues at the bargaining table where they should be.

BRIAN GARNER

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I rise today in the House to show appreciation for one of my constituents, Brian Garner, a resident of Pontypool. In a courageous act of heroism, Brian took control of a potentially dangerous situation involving others' lives.

Ryan, a grade 12 student at I.E. Weldon Secondary School, was a passenger on a school bus when the driver was suddenly struck in the face with flying glass from a shattered windshield while driving on Highway 35. The driver was temporarily blinded from debris in her eye. Brian took charge of the incident by steering the school bus safely off the highway and then administering first aid to the injured driver's eye.

I would like to thank Brian Garner for his quick action in saving the lives of not only the driver but the many students riding on the school bus. It's a pleasure today to recognize Brian Garner.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

AMAPCEO AGREEMENT

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I am pleased to inform the members of the House that an agreement has been ratified between the government and the second-largest bargaining unit in the Ontario public service on the issue of job security. The agreement is with AMAPCEO, which is the Association of Management, Administrative and Professional Crown Employees of Ontario. The association represents about 5,000 public servants, including policy, financial and systems professionals.

Yesterday, the membership of AMAPCEO voted overwhelmingly in favour of the agreement with the government. AMAPCEO has indicated that the unofficial results are that more than 85% voted to ratify the agreement. The government also ratified the agreement yesterday.

The agreement includes an innovative job matching and job registry system to allow employees who wish to leave the public service to trade their job to an employee who is scheduled to be laid off. The agreement also provides for a variety of job security measures, including six months' notice or six months' pay in lieu of notice, an enhanced severance of two weeks' pay for each year of service, the right to bump a less senior employee and the right to pension bridging if eligible.

I am delighted that we have been able to reach an agreement with AMAPCEO on these important job security issues. I also want to congratulate the leadership of AMAPCEO for their hard work and their creativity in negotiating innovative solutions to the challenges facing the government and its workforce.

Finally, I hope that this agreement will help to pave the way to an agreement with OPSEU and to end the strike.

1350

WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): Today I would like to introduce significant reforms to the occupational health and safety system, with the goal of preventing workplace injuries and illness and embarking on a more cost-effective course to make workplaces in this province among the safest in the world.

As Minister of Labour, I am deeply committed to workplace health and safety and I am determined to eliminate the duplication, inefficiency and lack of measurable and positive results by developing an overall vision with strategic directions and performance objectives which will allow all workplace parties to understand their roles and work together to ensure that common goals are met.

The reforms today include immediate action on the recommendations of the review panel on workplace health and safety, which presented its report to me on December 20, 1995. As recommended, I am reaffirming that the internal responsibility system which was introduced in 1979 remain as the foundation of Ontario's approach to workplace health and safety. It is built on the

self-reliance of the workplace parties and means that employers and employees must be responsible for eliminating hazards within their workplaces and for achieving optimum health and safety performance.

The ministry's role will be to set, communicate and enforce standards in health and safety while ensuring that the workplace parties become more self-reliant in the day-to-day achievement and maintenance of those standards. The ministry remains firmly committed to its enforcement role, and where there are violations of the Occupational Health and Safety Act, we will take action. Consistent with this, as I have previously announced, the current number of health and safety inspectors will be maintained.

We are implementing action in five areas. First, the functions of the Workplace Health and Safety Agency will be integrated into the Workers' Compensation Board. This is consistent with Bill 15, passed in December 1995, which changed the purpose clause of the WCB to include the prevention of injury and illness and the promotion of health and safety. A senior executive at the WCB will be given responsibility for health and safety.

Second, I have asked the Deputy Minister of Labour and the president of the Workers' Compensation Board to work with stakeholders to identify priorities for health and safety and to develop a performance measurement and monitoring system that will tell us whether we are achieving our goal of preventing injuries and illness.

Third, a task force will review the health and safety delivery organizations to determine their role, future and funding and make them more sector-specific. The task force will report by July 1, 1996. At the same time, an independent value-for-money audit of these organizations will be conducted, with an emphasis on their expenditure management and program evaluation practices.

Fourth, certification training will remain as an integral component of Ontario's health and safety system, as will the joint workplace health and safety committees. However, as part of its new mandate, the Workers' Compensation Board will set province-wide training standards and approve training programs and providers that meet these standards. This will allow for flexibility in achieving certification outcomes by making a variety of programs and delivery methods available to meet the needs of different workplaces.

Finally, in order to ensure progress in injury and illness prevention and reduce compensation costs, I am pleased to announce that we will be increasing our commitment to research in health and safety. We need our own research to focus practical, preventive efforts properly by understanding injury mechanisms correctly and to develop effective programs and strategies to gain a competitive advantage. Savings achieved through administrative streamlining will be reinvested in research. This initiative will involve new partnerships with the private sector, universities and research organizations.

These reforms support our objective of creating a coordinated strategy aimed at achieving progressive reductions in injury and illness occurrence and related costs and demonstrate our government's deep commitment to health and safety and our desire to make Ontario's workplaces among the safest in the world.

AMAPCEO AGREEMENT

Mr Joseph Cordiano (Lawrence): Now that the minister has reached agreement with AMAPCEO, I think a question that should be put to the minister is, when will he reach agreement with OPSEU and treat OPSEU workers with the same kind of respect and the same kind of fairness? I would ask the minister if he would stop being a revolutionary zealot for just a moment and begin to reach agreement with OPSEU, which would bring us an agreement that would have fairness as the watchword and certainly would deal with the front-line workers.

Mr Chris Stockwell (Etobicoke West): Dave Johnson a revolutionary zealot? What does that make the rest of us?

Mr Cordiano: All I would say to the member for Etobicoke West is that he's been acting as a great cheerleader the last couple of days, so maybe that will get him into cabinet. Keep up that cheerleading role, because that may get you places.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member for Etobicoke West is not in his own seat.

Mr Cordiano: The minister would do well if he would put the interests of fairness ahead of his own, as I said, being an ideologue and the revolutionary zealot that he's been throughout this strike. I know that he looks like a fair man, but he hasn't been very fair throughout these proceedings with OPSEU. Let me just point out how he has not been fair.

The fact of the matter is that the front-line workers, the OPSEU workers, will be facing the brunt of any cuts that are made; 75% of the cuts will be made within the ranks of OPSEU and certainly not within the ranks of AMAPCEO. I think that's cause for concern. The fact that an agreement has been reached with middle managers is fine, but, as I say, bring that same level of fairness to the front-line workers who provide daily service to the public. Treat them in the same way.

It's not visible to us, it's not clear to us, that in fact the government will move to act with fairness because, quite frankly, 27,000 jobs will be lost. Those are the budgetary numbers that were indicated in the economic statement in November of last year. Let's make that clear: It is the brunt of the cuts that will be falling on the part of OPSEU members, and that's why they're acting in the way that they're acting. They're very concerned about who is going to lose their job, and I think the job losses will be up to 27,000, regardless of what the minister indicates here today. It behooves him to show that kind of fairness and that kind of concern, because the brunt will fall on those OPSEU workers.

I ask the minister to act with the same degree of diligence today on behalf of OPSEU and reach an agreement with those OPSEU workers; reach that settlement soon, not later on.

WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I'm interested to see the Minister of Labour's statement about the health and safety agency and her artificial commitments to health and safety. She reiterated today the nine recommendations that were contained in her report, but

she left out a very important aspect of it, and I quote from the report, "that it is vitally important that these recommendations are implemented in close consultation with workplace parties." The minister, I would submit, is not consulting.

There was a very interesting letter in today's Toronto Star from Mr Gord Wilson, the president of the Ontario Federation of Labour. "It is an outrageous distortion of the truth for Labour Minister Elizabeth Witmer to make the accusation that Ontario's labour movement 'rejected her invitation to participate' in her review of workplace health and safety...." He goes on to say, "What is clear is that the invisible minister is using profoundly misleading statements to cover up her total lack of consultation...."

Southam reported two days ago that "An ashen-faced Labour minister had to run away from workers with a police escort on Monday." Imagine that: Ontario's Labour minister needing a police escort to be taken away from working people. I think that's an absolute shame.

This is the first Minister of Labour in memory who has needed that. This is the first Minister of Labour who wouldn't address the building trades council in Windsor. She sent the poor young fellow from Nepean there to be her lackey, and he got a warm Windsor welcome when he was there.

Successive Labour ministers have had heated differences with management and labour, and I would suggest that this government's policy towards working people is causing unrest which will harm investment, cost jobs and cost working people the security and safety they need in their—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member's time has expired.

1400

AMAPCEO AGREEMENT

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I offer my congratulations to AMAPCEO on its first collective agreement. AMAPCEO is a small union negotiating its first collective agreement. It must have been particularly tough against this government, a government that is so keen on slashing at civil servants to pay for its \$5-billion tax cut.

The settlement with AMAPCEO does not take away from the fact that this government is planning to lay off up to 27,000 civil servants to pay for its tax cut for the most affluent people in our society, and it doesn't take away from the fact that it has stripped civil servants of the right to keep their job and their union if their work is privatized, a right held by workers in the private sector. Moving away from your position on successor rights would not cost this government an extra penny, so the argument that it would is a false one, and it would go a long way to resolving this dispute.

The minister should also stop violating the media blackout on the OPSEU strike. His repeated comment on how long the talks will take is a serious obstacle to reaching a collective agreement.

This government's actions are bad for the men and women who work for it, but it's also bad for the broader public sector. The morale problems and the economic

problems caused by this government, constantly holding the axe over people, will affect public services and communities in a very serious way.

WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): In response to the announcement by the Minister of Labour, we see once again another piece in the government's attack on the rights of working people. They continue to profess to care about workplace health and safety, and yet every statement, every action, every decision they've made is one of taking away rights of workers, taking away the very things that will make our workplaces safe.

For instance, in the training that she so proudly announced is going to be reformed, the training for both employers' and employees' representatives on the mandatory health and safety committees will go down. The training for workplace health and safety training will go down from 120 hours to 56 hours. They're cutting back on the most important part of workplace health and safety injury prevention, that is, training of employees and employers to recognize and deal with workplace situations that could cause injury.

We know from the evaluations of both managers and employees who attend these courses that they're virtually all saying there wasn't enough time to deal with all the content and they recommended that more time be given. That's the direction one ought to be going in if you truly cared about worker health and safety, but instead this government is cutting back on that training.

What goes out the window? Well, it looks like the second-level course on health and safety law is gone, and that's a neat trick, because if you don't teach workers what their rights are, you don't need to worry about them trying to enforce them, do you? You're also taking away a portion of this that talks about recognizing, assessing and controlling health hazards. Again, how could taking that away possibly make our workplaces safer? Chemical hazard training and biological hazard training are being removed and eliminated. How can removing and eliminating that kind of training make our workplaces safer? It can't. It doesn't take any kind of rocket scientist to realize that all these steps are hurting the ability of employers and employees to make their workplace a safer place.

What else has gone out the window? Musculoskeletal injury prevention. What is that all about? In part, it's about repetitive strain injury. Where have we heard this government talking about repetitive strain injury before? How about in the Jackson WCB takeaway plan? This all fits. If we don't teach the employees, the workers there to recognize repetitive strain injury, we don't need to worry about them complaining about the fact we took it away in WCB, which they're planning to do, because they don't know about it.

That's the way this government likes to operate: behind closed doors, no public meetings, do everything in secret, and now: "Let's keep the workers ignorant. Let's not tell the workers or teach the workers about workplace health and safety, because what we're planning to do with WCB is take away their ability to claim for these kinds of rightful injuries anyway."

We have seen nothing but a steady onslaught, attack, on workers in this province, from Bill 7 to Bill 15, the Jackson WCB takeaways, the closing of the workplace health and safety centre and the OPSEU strike. It all says this government has an agenda that's anti-worker and it's showing itself more and more every day.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): On a point of personal privilege, Mr Speaker: Yesterday, I believe that in response to a question regarding the expressway, the Minister of Transportation may have breached standing order 23, deliberately misinterpreting my position on the issue. The minister said, "Here's the same member who didn't want the expressway built. Not too long ago he didn't want it built."

I believe that is a deliberate misinterpretation and misleading of this House to suggest that is the case. I would be happy to submit evidence to you as Speaker as to my position on that and ask the minister to look back at his comments and withdraw the comments—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order. You don't have a point. You can ask that in question period. That's not a point of order. Would the member take his seat, please. I believe it would be appropriate to ask a question such as that in question period.

INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): I seek unanimous consent of this House to recognize the United Nations International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon Ms Mushinski: First of all, let me tell you how honoured I feel to have this opportunity to recognize this most important day, the day marking the 36th anniversary of the Sharpeville massacre in South Africa. Observing this day allows us an opportunity to remember those whose lives were sacrificed in the struggle for racial equality and freedom.

As Ontario's Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, this also provides me with an opportunity to acknowledge the ongoing effort of dedicated people across this province, this nation and in the nations around the world. The hard work of those dedicated individuals reflects the principles and goals of this important day. Their commitment helps to bring our communities together in a spirit of mutual understanding, respect, equality and justice, all towards the end of eradicating racial discrimination.

Just this morning I had the opportunity to acknowledge the efforts of a few of those individuals who have committed themselves to promoting racial harmony in our province. I was honoured to meet the winners of this year's awards given by the Human Rights and Race Relations Centre. It was a privilege to honour their leadership and commitment in the area of race relations. They clearly understand the importance of getting involved and the need for seeking new and creative ways to achieve the common community goals of peace and understanding.

Those award winners demonstrated to me that individuals do make a difference when it comes to enhancing the quality of life in this province. The challenges are real, but the positive dividends of getting involved are equally real. In order for individuals to succeed in their efforts to eliminate discrimination, they must be supported by their elected officials and the institutions placed in their care. Discrimination, when it does occur, must be addressed promptly and thoroughly. There is no question about that.

1410

This government is committed to ensuring that the protection of human rights in this province is given its due. We are adamant that reform of the Human Rights Commission must be carried to its conclusion as quickly and sensibly as is conceivable. There must be greater efficiency in case management and prompt and effective delivery of human rights decisions. The seriousness of this issue demands no less.

The province must do its part to help achieve an Ontario in which all residents are treated fairly, justly and equally. We must always keep in mind the commitment and leadership provided in this area by the people of this province. If we do, I am confident that together we can shape a strong and exciting future for our children, our communities and the province as a whole.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I rise in the House today to commemorate this very special international day for the elimination of racial discrimination. This multicultural bow marks the day, March 21, which was declared by the United Nations in 1966 in response to the Sharpeville massacre that happened in South Africa. Also back in 1988, federal and provincial members and ministers in Canada agreed to mark this day. It was a very proud moment at the time and I hope we can continue to recognize this day and days beyond. I am pleased to see the celebration that accompanies this observation recognized in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as it is both important and necessary to all who make Ontario their home, regardless of our culture or our cultural diversity.

I continue, though, to have concerns that even in our own jurisdiction we see inequalities that continue to exist. We have seen where employment equity and pay equity legislation have been attacked with force, and surely while education of course is the most effective way to deal with discrimination, legislation is just as important to address this terrible disease.

The lack of recognition has put people of ethnic backgrounds who are not the majority in the most vulnerable position. We must continue to strive for more equality in our workplaces and promote the strengths of our differences instead of focusing on stereotypes and misconceptions that poison our homes, our schools, our workplaces and our communities.

Only with the commitment and cooperation of all people can we continue to strive towards the goal of ridding our neighbourhoods of conflicts due to racism. Each of us is entitled to the chance to work, to succeed on our own merit, regardless of birth or background. Each of us has the right to choose our own part in the world as long as we do no harm to our fellow citizens,

the right to believe what we want to believe and to say so, the right to worship any god or no god at all, the right to feel safe in our own neighbourhood or any other neighbourhood. Each of us has the obligation to work if we can, to care for our children and for our parents when the time comes.

We all pay if people are unproductive. We all pay if people are denied their self-interests, their special interests. We cannot afford the cost of racism. Opportunity is lost through this disease that has taken root in our society. Throughout history there are grim reminders of discrimination in all facets of life and in all societies, and here in Ontario and across the world new challenges face us in fighting discrimination even in 1996 that our parents today and grandparents could even dream of happening. New technologies raise challenges in combating racism when we see the infiltration of hate literature through means such as the Internet and global communications. Nevertheless, we must stay strongly committed to fighting the festering of hate propaganda around us, no matter what the medium.

Fortunately, there are committed groups and individuals at work promoting our strengths together as Ontarians and as Canadians. I am honoured to highlight one very special group like this one for you today. The Urban Alliance on Race Relations is a non-profit charitable organization whose primary goal is to promote a stable and a healthy multiracial environment in the greater Toronto area. It was established 21 years ago by a group of conscientious and concerned Toronto citizens in response to the increasing frequency of verbal and physical attacks against minorities. You may recall, my colleagues, the late Dr Wilson Head, whose work is universally recognized in respect to the elimination of racism. Dr Head was an inspiration to this organization and his work stands as a pillar for us to emulate.

For the past two decades, the Urban Alliance has been instrumental in identifying and addressing issues of racism. Among the many accolades the Urban Alliance has received over the years, one of the most rewarding accomplishments has been the establishment of Colour of Freedom, an annual festival that utilizes music, forums, artistic presentation and cultural displays to commemorate the United Nations declared International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

Every ethnic and racial community has specific days, as we know, throughout the year on which they celebrate their religious and cultural traditions. However, the Urban Alliance believes that a society free from racism, that embraces diversity and celebrates Toronto's ethnic and cultural mosaic, cannot be a reality unless these communities are brought together to share these traditions. In light of this belief, eight years ago the Urban Alliance decided that no better day existed for promoting diversity than March 21.

In a country like Canada, where one of the major cities has been deemed by the United Nations as the most culturally diverse city in the world, commemorating March 21 is a necessity. I had the honour of being the co-chair for this year's Colour of Freedom celebrations, which began with a festival at Harbourfront Centre on Sunday, March 17. In addition to the dynamic display of

music and dance and dramatic performances, the festival included an award presentation to CITY-TV's president, Moses Znaimer, in recognition of his commitment to promoting a workforce that reflects Metro's and Toronto's ethnoracial diversity.

The Urban Alliance on Race Relations should be applauded for building bridges between individuals and groups of all backgrounds. On behalf of all members of the Legislature, I extend my sincere congratulations to Moses Znaimer and the hardworking individuals of the Urban Alliance on Race Relations.

Organizations like this cannot do it alone. We must have committed legislators, as we see in the House here, and stand beyond the partisan rhetoric that we oftentimes go into, because it is people's lives that we deal with, people's hopes and people's aspirations. Each day we can see it in the faces of people as they struggle to get work. We see it as they struggle to raise their children because they have been denied because of their place of birth or because of their name, an awkward name that maybe other people cannot pronounce, and they are being discriminated against.

If we are to eliminate racism, we must make that personal commitment to ourselves before we start making legislation. I feel that sometimes we haven't moved to that point of view yet. It takes a lot to do that, I know. Each of us, every one of us is not at all away from racism. We have within ourselves some views that are held that must be eliminated in order to accept us as a community. As we accept each of us in this community, we can be more productive and live in a better place, and then we can tell the United Nations that we are the best country in the world.

1420

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I have to say that this International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination is indeed a very important one for us all. Racism causes serious physical, psychological and economic damage for many people of colour, for individuals and communities alike, and as such we have a duty and obligation as legislators to commit ourselves to the elimination of racism.

It is wonderful, of course, for us all to be able to praise equality-seeking people as they do their work in their struggle for equality. To support them is another duty for all of us. But beyond what individuals do, it's what governments do that for me is equally important.

I have to tell you, I struggled to find something very positive to say about the government of Ontario as it relates to this field of anti-racism and anti-discrimination, and I have to tell you, I couldn't find any. It saddens me to say that I could not find too many instances where this government has made a strong commitment towards the elimination of discrimination and racism. I look at all of the programs that we had, and all I have is a catalogue of assaults on policies, programs and statutes. Let me go through them.

You have as a government eliminated the Anti-Racism Secretariat. It was not a nice little race relations program that we had where we all were talking about celebrating our differences. It was something more than that. It was an acknowledgement that racism exists in society and that

we have to be proactive towards its elimination. What does this government do? It eliminates the Anti-Racism Secretariat. You tell me, how does that contribute towards an equal society? You tell me how you've done that by eliminating that secretariat.

Let me go through the catalogue of things that you have chopped in the last six or seven months: citizenship development; access to the professional trade demonstration fund; settlement and integration. You have eliminated the anti-racism project fund, the anti-racism operating fund and the anti-racism community placement fund. You're eliminating the Advisory Council on Multiculturalism and Citizenship. This is the catalogue of all of the good things that you were doing for all of the people of Ontario.

Many members will shake their heads. You may not like to hear what I'm saying, but this is what you're doing. Your actions will speak much louder than the shaking of your heads around this particular issue, and I tell you, it contributes very little towards the elimination of discrimination.

The anti-racism office was an acknowledgement that discrimination existed, and it did innovative anti-racism programs. That's what it was doing, because anti-racism isn't something that we can just wish away. It isn't something that we can magically say it's gone; we want it to go away because it hurts. It's something you've got to work at. It's something that I worked on for years. It doesn't come automatically that we are all anti-racists because we simply want it. You've got to work at it.

Let me go on with the list.

Welcome Houses: There were five Welcome Houses in Ontario; by this April, those five Welcome Houses are gone. They were in Hamilton, they were in Mississauga, they were in Scarborough, North York and Toronto. They served 63,000 people a year, immigrants who come to this country with great skills, many of them. Our Welcome Houses served them to give them information, to give them ESL programs and training, to refer them to places where their skills could be best utilized. And what have you done? You've eliminated them. How does eliminating Welcome Houses contribute towards the elimination of discrimination in the society? You tell me, you tell the public, how you've done that.

Provincial funding for ethnospecific agencies has been eliminated. They provided such services as employment training, language classes, housing help etc, to particular newcomer communities. You have done that. You have cut the funding for ethnospecific agencies and then you tell me that, as a government, you're committed towards the elimination of racism. Explain it through your actions. How are you doing that?

You have employment equity, which was our attempt as a government to bring about greater equality for women, for people with disabilities, for people of colour and aboriginal people. And what have you done? You have eliminated that program as well. You said that wasn't good that it contributes to discrimination—interesting.

It's amazing how everything you're doing is solving the discrimination and racist problems we have in society, and yet all I can give you is a whole catalogue of pro-

grams that our government was committed to, that every government should be committed to, if you are genuinely interested in dealing with the issues of racism and discrimination. You can shake the head all you want, some of you; some of you can wave your hand, but the people who are listening will know that when you eliminate all of these programs, you are not helping our immigrant communities, you're not helping our people of colour. You are not a role model of the government towards the elimination of discrimination.

The Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation can come here today saying how wonderful it is to give awards to individuals who've done work in the field of anti-racism, but I can tell you that's not good enough. I'm concerned about what you as a government are doing. What are your policies? Tell me what your policies are. What are your programs, other than cutting the ones we have put into place? What are the statutes you've got?

Mr Premier, ministers and backbenchers, tell me the policies you're putting into place to eliminate discrimination and racism. You have none.

But I can tell you this, what the people have learned through all of the things we have done they cannot unlearn. As you continue to gut away at services that hurt, all in the most vulnerable, they will remember and they will get stronger. All I can hope is that you will learn that as you do this, you're not making a very important contribution towards the elimination of racism. I hope you'll learn from it as well, and that all of us can have some hope that this government can do something that can be very helpful in this regard.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SECURITY OF LEGISLATIVE PRECINCT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): My first question is for the Premier and, Premier, it relates to the issue of the use of the OPP riot squad. I'm aware of and appreciate the fact that terms of reference are now being drawn up for a public inquiry into Monday's events and into the violence that took place on that day. My concern in addressing this question today is with the use and the behaviour of that particular squad during the weeks that this inquiry will take place.

I have to tell you, Premier, that I am particularly concerned because of some of the extremely provocative statements that have been made and continue to be made, particularly by Mr Jay Hope, the head of Monday's OPP unit. You'll be aware that on Tuesday he said, "Anyone who got hurt brought it upon themselves," and yesterday he said he was proud of what his men did, and said, "I would do it again tomorrow."

So I ask, Premier, what assurance you can give us and give the public that we will not see a repeat of the kind of violence that we saw Monday while this inquiry is taking place?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): There'll be a full public inquiry. I understand that independent investigations have been called by the OPP, the Police Complaints Board, and the Speaker is responsible for security here.

Mrs McLeod: Mr Speaker and Premier, you'll appreciate the fact that my concern is that the Deputy Premier has indicated this inquiry could take some time, and that over the course of the next weeks and the next months, perhaps, we can fully expect that we are going to see more demonstrations at Queen's Park. We can expect that the agenda of slash-and-burn cuts that your government is pursuing is going to mean that we're going to see demonstrations of nurses, health care workers, patients who are concerned about broken commitments on health care, and we can expect to see a lot of angry teachers who have been given pink slips and are worried about their jobs, and maybe angry parents who feel that you've broken your commitments not to cut classroom education.

1430

All of these, Premier, are legitimate concerns and will lead to legitimate demonstrations on the part of the public, and I am asking you what assurance you can give as Premier that these people can come to this place of democracy, can come to Queen's Park and can exercise their legitimate right to protest your policies without fear for their personal safety. What assurance can you give that before this inquiry is completed those protesters will not be met by an OPP riot squad whose leader still seems to have the attitude that his role is to send his troops charging into crowds with their billy clubs?

Hon Mr Harris: The member raises concerns and I'm sure the Speaker has been listening. I would be happy to reiterate and refer them to the Speaker.

Mrs McLeod: I would expect that if there is a review taking place on the part of the Ontario Provincial Police separately from the public inquiry, if that's something which is available in short order it would be made not to the Speaker but indeed to the Solicitor General. I'm appreciative of the public inquiry, but my concern is with what will happen between now and then and with the need for an assurance that demonstrators are not going to be met with that potential violence or be intimidated by the threat of it. My concerns are increased by the fact that the Solicitor General, who is responsible for the OPP, has referred to what happened on Monday as being appropriate restraint, and because at this point not a single member of your government, including yourself, Premier, has dissociated themselves from Mr Hope's comments that people who got hurt on Monday brought it upon themselves.

I suggest, Premier, that what happened Monday will be the focus of a public inquiry but that it is not an isolated occurrence, that it is the result of a building sense of confrontation, and it's the result of a climate that has been made more tense by your government's readiness to meet demonstrators with concrete barriers and with police in full riot gear. Premier, I don't think anybody believes that we can continue to see the public intimidated or that we, as legislators, are comfortable continuing to work in an armed camp.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Question, please.

Mrs McLeod: I ask, Premier, what steps you are prepared to take to ensure that citizens of this province who come to this place to legitimately and peacefully express their views are not met with violence even when

their views are in opposition to yours, and I ask whether at least you are prepared to ensure that the Solicitor General will review the use and the operating procedures of the OPP unit and make any necessary changes between now and the time of that public inquiry report.

Hon Mr Harris: It's the responsibility of the Speaker and I'm sure he'll do that.

CLEANING SERVICES CONTRACT

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): My question is to the Chair of Management Board of Cabinet. Last week a tender was let to Signature Building Maintenance Systems to take over the office cleaning function in the Queen's Park complex. Could you confirm for me today that as a result of this tender, half of the full-time staff and a third of the part-time staff will be laid off and that the remaining workers will be forced to accept a 37% pay cut and lose all their employment benefits? Are these the facts, Minister? Is this what other workers can expect from your government in the future? Why would you do this kind of thing?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): We have been looking at various options of downsizing the government, making the government more efficient and more effective, reducing costs for the taxpayer. We have gone through a tender process, as all governments do, I might say. This is a very common form of proposal through municipal, federal and provincial governments that put out a tender to seek on behalf of the taxpayer the best value and the most efficient way to provide a service.

I don't have the precise numbers of people who are involved. I do know, though, that even before this government took office, even under the previous government sitting over here, the NDP, and I'm quite certain under the Liberal government 1985 to 1990, many of the functions referred to, the maintenance functions in the buildings under the jurisdiction of the government, were performed by the private sector. This is one more initiative of the government to do better, to deliver services better at lower cost to the taxpayers.

Mr Duncan: The minister's answer is an insult to the people who are losing their jobs, many of whom have worked for the government for years. I'd like the Chair of Management Board to look up in the gallery and look at those ladies. Those are the ladies who have been cleaning our offices. Their average length of service is 14 years. Many of them have more than 20 years. Most of them will now, the ones that remain, be making less than \$10, but the minister didn't mention two points, and I think some of those seals in the back who are clapping will want to know this.

It has been suggested to us that in fact the company that won the bid was not the low bidder, that it didn't have the lowest bid, that it wasn't the lowest bidder. It has also been suggested to us that the company that won the bid did not even meet the prequalification standards. So what do we have going on here?

You just told this House that you were acting in the best interests of the taxpayers. If that's the case, why was the winning company not the lowest bidder? And is this

how you're going to continue to treat ladies like that who have more than 20 years of service to this province and the people in this province?

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): Look them in the face, David, they're right up there.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order, order. The member for Windsor-Riverside is out of order.

Hon David Johnson: These are always difficult situations. There's no question about that. The problem we face is, as my colleague has indicated, that previous governments have put us in this sort of position: the spending of the Liberal government between 1985 and 1990, an increase of spending of \$10 billion in three years, the deficits of the NDP government in five years, increasing the debt of the province of Ontario.

I will say one more thing, that while this is difficult, I still firmly believe that the human resource policies of the province of Ontario, in terms of severance provisions, in terms of benefits and salaries, is unequalled, frankly, in government services. Yes, there are situations that are difficult and have to be dealt with, but this government is attempting to rein in costs, to make government sustainable, and we're trying to do that to the best of our ability. And this is one of the difficult circumstances—

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Hamilton East is out of order, and he's not in his own seat.

Mr Duncan: The minister's answer rings really hollow. If in fact you're trying to act in the best interests of the taxpayers, would you now confirm that the company that won the bid was not in fact the low bidder? Would you confirm that for this House, because if you're acting to save money, why didn't you take the lowest bid?

Will you confirm to this House that when the tender was let this summer by your government—it has nothing to do with your false statements about previous government; this has to do with you and your government—there was no requirement for successor rights? That has been the case since this tender's been let for more than 20 years, and in this case, the work has been done by the private sector for the last 20 years. I hope you'll confirm that.

Finally, on the issue of severance, these workers, by your laws, were not entitled to severance. The union itself has negotiated, as I understand it, a deal to get these workers some severance, but there was no provision for severance.

I would suggest to you, Minister, that not only have you not acted in the best interests of these workers, you haven't acted in the best interests of the taxpayers. Will you come clean with this House and with the people of this province, that this agenda's about rewarding your friends and not dealing with working people?

1440

Hon David Johnson: I'm puzzled about the reference of rewarding friends. I don't know what that particular allegation is. The member opposite asks what I can confirm about this particular tender. I will confirm that the policy of the province of Ontario is to accept the best tender, considering price and quality, and I will confirm that all tenders must meet the qualifications. I can assure the member that this is the policy of the province of

Ontario. I don't have all the details of this particular tender before me here today, but those are the policies of the province of Ontario. We're looking for the best price and the best quality of service for the people of the province of Ontario, and I would reiterate that they're difficult situations that have to be dealt with. But the human resource policies of the province are very fair and as generous as possible, given the circumstance that we've been left with, a \$100-billion debt from the previous government and deficits of \$10 billion a year.

The Speaker: New question. Third party.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): My question is to the same minister. Minister, last night I met with the workers who belong to the union that is being attacked by your government. I listened to and looked at those workers and I saw the faces of people whose lives were being devastated. Many, in fact most of them, are Portuguese-Canadian women. Many of them have spouses who are in the construction industry who are also out of work. They're the primary income earner and they don't know what they're going to do in the future.

Mr Minister, many of those workers were crying as their union representative described to them the situation that your government has placed them in. As a result of your anti-worker Bill 7, these workers who have enjoyed rights for 20 years now face the prospect of unemployment. Of those few workers who do manage to stay employed, many will be part-time; they're going to have over 30% wage cuts, few benefits, no union security. In fact, a lot of these women are terrified at even being here today because the new employer won't recognize seniority, and if their face is on TV, there's a good chance that any possibility they had for a job is now gone.

The Speaker: Would you put your question, please.

Mr Christopherson: They are here today, Minister, because they realize they have to stand up and fight. This is the only chance they have.

Please stand on your feet, look at those people and tell them and the rest of Ontario why Bill 7 makes this a better Ontario, because they're being turfed out of work. Tell the people of Ontario how that makes—

The Speaker: The question has been asked. Minister.

Hon David Johnson: The member opposite asks about successor rights, and I think it's well known that the final offer we have given to the union, to OPSEU and indeed to AMAPCEO, before the blackout is that we would give reasonable efforts to attempt to transfer the jobs with the new employer. Yes, we have to make the government more effective and more efficient. We've certainly been put in that position by the spending and the taxing and the deficits of the previous governments, and we need to downsize and we need to restructure.

We have stated, through the offer that's on the table, before the blackout that we would give the efforts that we can to ensure that those employees will move with the new employer. I will stand on my feet here today and say that the very provision which we have put on the table for OPSEU we will observe with the people involved in this particular contract.

Mr Christopherson: There's no question that your anti-worker Bill 7 and the denial of successor rights are a key reason why we have an OPSEU strike in this

province. It's also the only reason why these workers are facing unemployment.

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): What about the debt?

Mr Christopherson: We hear the backbenchers of the Tory government talk about the deficit, and therein lies our problem. They don't want to talk about the people who are affected, the lives that are affected. It's only the dollars.

Minister, what we want to know from you is: How do you justify to these workers that because you're taking their jobs away, the wealthy in this province are going to get a tax cut? How do you tell them that destroying their lives is worth giving the wealthy in this province a 30% tax cut? How do you justify that to these workers?

Hon David Johnson: Again, I would reiterate that, first of all, what I would say to those workers and to the member opposite is that the government will pursue the offer that it has put on the table to the union and that we will make our efforts to help those employees—

Interruption.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Welland-Thorold is totally out of order and I won't warn him again in this Legislature.

Hon David Johnson: I will reiterate what I told the member opposite in the first part of his question. We had on the table, before the blackout, that we would give all reasonable efforts to assist the employees to go with the new employer. We will do that. We will give our best efforts.

I would also say that this government has to look in terms of the future and the position the government is in. We are looking to create jobs. We are looking to have jobs not only for the people who are here today but for hundreds of thousands of residents of Ontario. How do we do that? We do that by balancing the budget, we do that by eliminating the labour bill, we do that by many other techniques to remove barriers to business in the province of Ontario. That's precisely what we're doing, and I might say the income tax reduction that the member opposite is alluding to is a key component of that. By taking these measures, we will encourage investment and job growth in the province of Ontario. Hundreds of thousands of jobs will be created in Ontario.

Mr Christopherson: The easiest way to create jobs in this province is perhaps to keep the ones we've already got.

Let me ask the minister about comments that were made to Mr Alan Ferens, who is the business manager for the Service Employees International Union, which has represented these workers for over 20 years, by one of the principals of the corporation that won the bid, a Mr Hermes Iordanous. Apparently, Mr Iordanous told Mr Ferens that indeed he did not qualify to bid on the tender because he didn't meet the prequalification process. He told Mr Ferens that he then contacted his MPP to help him out. His MPP in this case happens to be you, sir. As has been pointed out, we understand that this was not the lowest tender. We also understand that this is the only company that did not talk to the union prior to the bidding process. So, Minister, what I would like to know

from you is, did you or your office play any role at all in assisting this corporation and if they did, what was that role?

Hon David Johnson: I wish to assure the member opposite that all of those who are involved in tendering in this process went through the regular process. All the policies of the province of Ontario were followed in reaching a decision on this matter and the policies of the province of Ontario require that the tender be accepted in terms of price, in terms of quality and—

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Cochrane South is out of order and out of his seat.

Hon David Johnson: —I wish to assure the member that all qualifications associated with this tender must be met and that's what happened in this case.

The Speaker: New question, the leader of the third party.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): This is very disturbing and it's unfortunate that this side of the gallery is closed and that these women could not sit facing the minister when he was giving those kinds of answers.

1450

WORKFARE

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question for the Minister of Community and Social Services regarding his ruminations about his workfare program. On Tuesday, in response to a question from the member for Scarborough Centre, the minister described a project of the Oshawa Boy Scouts Camp Samac, which had received a \$100,000 grant from General Motors.

At that time, the minister said, "This is a project that will improve the community, and these people who will work on this program will have received training and will receive the networking possible to receive real jobs." The minister went on to describe this project in various interviews with the media, the newspapers and various of the electronic media in which he described this project as sort of an example of how his workfare program might work and how it might benefit workers and people who are receiving social assistance.

Could the minister explain, has he finalized the agreement between his ministry and the Oshawa Boy Scouts camp on this project, and if he has, could he explain when that was finalized and when the project will proceed?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Community and Social Services): To be correct and accurate, what I have been describing are suggestions that the community and organizations in the various communities across this province have been coming up with and indicating their interest both to me and members of our caucus.

Quite frankly, our workfare program, Ontario Works, is intended to do several things and I appreciate the opportunity to speak about it because we're intending to do several things: first of all, to give people an opportunity to improve some skills, give them the opportunity to network to perhaps lead to real jobs, give them an opportunity to improve their community and have a certain amount of community support.

That's what we're doing right now through our consultation process. We've been consulting with various organizations in various areas across the province and certainly, through our committee of MPPs, we will be further doing consultations to make sure that we truly look at the programs that are going to assist and improve communities. Once again, these are suggestions that are coming to me and we've made no final decisions on this at this time.

Mr Wildman: That's even more confusing because we consulted with Mr Al Freeman of the Oshawa District Council Boy Scouts of Canada and he indicated to us that it was not his proposal to you, that quite frankly, he said, "We have not agreed to anything." As a matter of fact, Mr Freeman said that after meeting with the minister in Oshawa, they had serious concerns about the workfare, how it would be managed, who would cover the costs of supervision, and Mr Freeman had said that neither the Boy Scouts nor the community clubs, the Kiwanis, that met with the minister are in any position to supervise the workfare project and aren't interested in it.

As a result of the minister's remarks in the House and outside of this place, Mr Freeman has been spending his time answering telephone calls from the contractors who have already bid on this project who want to know what's going on, and he's having to assure them that, no, their bids are in fact being processed in the normal way. He's also had calls from donors who don't intend their contributions to support workfare projects.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Put your question.

Mr Wildman: He's had to confirm to the Kiwanis Club and to General Motors that they are not involved in a workfare project.

The Speaker: Put your question, please. Put your question.

Mr Wildman: Is it the case that the minister inadvertently misled the House on Monday when he said that this was an example of one of the projects that he would be proceeding with as part of a workfare initiative?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I don't believe I said I was proceeding with this particular project. I indicated, of course, that there are a number of recommendations coming from the community.

Frankly, I went to Oshawa at the invitation of the group. I actually saw the camp; I was there. Afterwards, we met with a number of the service groups and organizations in Oshawa to have a two-way dialogue to get rid of some of the misconceptions that perhaps the leader of the third party right now is trying to get out, certainly, dealing with a number of issues including, of course, the fact that workfare was not going to be a make-work project, but there are going to be programs to improve the community, programs to help people on social assistance. Certainly, these are the messages that we needed to get out because of a lot of, I guess, the misconceptions that are being put forth by other people.

I've met with a number of organizations across the province, with the MPPs and without, and certainly at the ministry, and we've got a lot of support for this program right now from many of the organizations.

Mr Wildman: The minister has indicated that somehow I'm trying to put forward "misconceptions," I think the word was he used, about this project. He also said "other people." I don't know whether he's including Mr Freeman in that group, but he certainly has no axe to grind in this matter.

Why won't the minister come clean and say, admit, that in his interviews with the press and on the radio this morning and the electronic media generally, that he hasn't had anything concrete to say about workfare, he doesn't have any proposals, he doesn't have a plan, he doesn't know how it's going to work and he doesn't even know if it will work, and that he is consulting with people, certainly, but at this point he doesn't have any plan and he doesn't know where he's going on workfare.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: It really astounds me how the leader of the third party doesn't recognize the value that there is to assisting people to somehow get back to work. Certainly, it is.

We've indicated that we're doing a lot of consulting work right now. We will be making an announcement, as I said, in the spring. But frankly, we get criticized when we don't consult with people and we get criticized when we do consult with people, and I don't know if you really realize what you actually want over there.

Clearly, this program is going to be designed to assist people to get off welfare and get real jobs, and it's a program that's designed to be very productive. Quite frankly, when the people out there, Ontarians, are really supportive of a program to assist people, I don't understand what the criticism here is.

I'd just like to share a thought with you here, and this was actually from our estimates, when we were going through this. The quote is, "Your administration is not the first one that has mentioned that to pay people from the public dole from the taxpayers a salary, pay for really in many cases doing nothing, is not the smartest way of conducting affairs." This is of course a quote from Mr Pouliot who was indicating that his party of course wanted to get involved with this type of a program, but unfortunately they didn't have either the gumption or the means to actually produce a program to get people back to work.

1500

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question's to the Attorney General. All of us I think are increasingly concerned about the growing incidence of racism and distribution of hate literature. The B'Nai Brith, their League for Human Rights documented the growth in it.

That's why I think many of us were very shocked when your office decided to drop the charges against Ernst Zundel. I can recall—and these are words that I would support—you called him:

"A self-identified Nazi...a key figure in a network of Fascists and white supremacists...responsible for publishing and exporting a huge volume of hate propaganda....

"This self-identified Nazi" is responsible for distributing this "not only in Canada but to over 41 countries

around the world. The government of Germany has asked that you take every action within your power to stop Ernst Zundel."

We know all of this and we know that all of us, yourself included, had indicated that there was a plan to proceed to prosecute Mr Zundel. The question is this: Why have you decided to drop the charges against Ernst Zundel?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I have been informed by the crown attorneys who are involved in prosecuting these cases and evaluating the evidence that upon screening of the charges—which were not laid by the police; they were charges laid privately—there was not enough evidence to proceed and successfully prosecute in this particular case.

Mr Phillips: I assume all of us here in the Legislature and certainly I think the community of Ontario are increasingly getting a sense of frustration, and I think rage is not too strong a word, at a feeling that somehow or other this is going on, that their politicians abhor it, but that nothing happens. Frankly, Minister, you, with all due respect, have contributed somewhat to this.

I can recall when you were in opposition, you were very clear. You said to the public—this was when you were in opposition—"Minister, you have it in your power to stop this man. When will you do it?" So I think you can appreciate the sense of frustration in the community when you yourself indicated that you had studied the matter and that it was your opinion that the laws did permit prosecution of Mr Zundel. I think you and all of us can appreciate, as I say, this enormous, growing sense of frustration by the community that they simply don't seem to be able to get forward with this matter.

Really the question to you is, where do we go from here? Will you tell the House how you plan to deal with it? Is it your opinion that the existing laws are sufficient and therefore you will proceed using the existing laws, or is it the ministry's opinion and your opinion that the laws need to be changed and that it is your plan therefore to proceed to ensure that the laws are changed?

Hon Mr Harnick: I share my good friend from Scarborough-Agincourt's concern about this issue, as he well knows. I remind members of the Legislature that the Ministry of the Attorney General does not lay charges.

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): That was then; this is now.

Hon Mr Harnick: The ministry doesn't lay the charges.

Mr Cooke: Why don't you apologize for the position you used to take when you were over here?

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order. The member for Windsor-Riverside's out of order.

Hon Mr Harnick: I think it's very clear that when charges are laid and the proper, factual foundation is available to prosecute those charges, those charges will be prosecuted.

The issue becomes one of the police who lay the charges gathering the necessary evidence in this kind of case, as in any other kind of case, so that we can prosecute successfully and satisfy the community. But these are issues that really need a foundation of facts to

prosecute upon, and those facts and the gathering of those facts are the responsibility of those who lay the charges, and those are the police officers.

The Speaker: The question has been answered.

CLEANING SERVICES CONTRACT

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I want to return to the Chair of Management Board on the same issue I raised with him earlier. Minister, on my final supplementary you did not answer the question that I asked you. I asked you very specifically whether or not you knew Mr Iordanous, given the fact that Mr Ferens states unequivocally that Mr Iordanous told him that he did not qualify to bid on the contract during the prequalification process, that he contacted his MPP, which is you, and that as a result of that contact, he suddenly did qualify and ultimately did win the tender, and he wasn't in fact the lowest tender.

I would ask you very directly and very simply, Minister, did you indeed assist Mr Iordanous, do you know Mr Iordanous, do you have any relationship at all and if so, what is that relationship?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I have no relationship with Mr Iordanous. I don't know Mr Iordanous. It's possible I have spoken to Mr Iordanous; I speak to a great number of constituents. I can't recall any such discussion. I had no role to play whatsoever in the selection of—apparently the winning company is Signature Building Maintenance Systems. I'm unaware of Signature Building Systems. I had no role to play whatsoever in selecting Signature Building Systems and I have no relationship whatsoever with Mr Iordanous.

I would like to also indicate that as a result of this questioning, information does come in and I will say that the contractor, apparently Signature Building Systems, which has been retained, will make all efforts to retain the existing staff. The contractor is proposing to negotiate job-sharing arrangements, to the member opposite, to retain as many of the existing staff as possible. Those staff whom they are unable to retain—and they indicate that the majority of the staff they will be able to retain—they have included in their price the cost of termination and severance for all staff who cannot be retained.

Mr Christopherson: Minister, if you think for one minute that suddenly, as a result of this issue being raised in the House, the few crumbs that may now be offered to these workers is sufficient compensation for the rights they've lost under Bill 7, you're dead wrong, and that applies to everyone else who's being offered less than the rights they had before you brought in your anti-worker Bill 7.

Let me ask you again, Minister, what your relationship was with Mr Iordanous, and by you, I also mean your staff, because basically what you're doing is calling someone a liar. Either Mr Ferens is lying or Mr Iordanous is lying or you are, but someone is, because the stories don't jibe.

I would ask you today, Minister, will you table all documents relevant to this bidding process so that we can all satisfy ourselves that this entire process was above-board? Will you table those documents today?

Hon David Johnson: I'll simply look into this matter as a result of the question, but I can assure the member opposite that I have no relationship with Mr Iordanous; I had no role to play whatsoever in the successful bidder, apparently a company called Signature Building Systems. In terms of the member's concern for the employees, I will say that apparently one of the reasons why the lowest bidder was not taken was that the lowest bidder intended to lay off all of the existing staff, but if that's what you want, we could have gone that route, whereas the successful bidder, Signature Building Systems, has indicated that it will retain the majority of the staff.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): New question, the member for Sarnia.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Sarnia has the floor.

1510

STUDENTS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Mr Dave Boushy (Sarnia): My question is to the Minister of Education and Training. Minister, I have a number of people in my riding who are the parents of special-needs children. What initiatives has the minister taken to recognize the value of innovative programs providing for special-needs children as they face the challenges of the education system?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I want to thank the honourable member for the question. It has been my privilege and really a pleasure over the past few months to visit different schools and to talk to educators across the province who are committed to providing exceptional programs and really innovative programs to help students who have very special needs.

My ministry recognizes the achievements of those schools and school boards through the Exemplary Practice in Integration Awards. These awards are given to schools and to school boards that use innovative practices in providing special education services across the province.

I'm pleased to inform the member and to inform other members in the chamber that some 353 nominations for these awards arrived last year, and that as a point of qualifying for the awards, the boards or schools agree to share those practices with other boards and schools across the province. I think that's an extraordinarily useful tool for those educators who are dedicating a tremendous amount of effort to meet the needs of these very special children. A hundred and five schools qualified for awards last year and I was pleased to present some of those personally.

Mr Boushy: Two of the learning disorders more recently diagnosed are attention deficit disorder, or ADD, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or ADHD. What efforts has the minister made in recognizing the needs of these students?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I'm sure, as many people in this chamber know, the ADD and ADHD, the extent of the learning disabilities from those disorders are only beginning, I think, to be fully understood by educators. I'm pleased to say that there are some 15 places now in the

province, at three of our demonstration schools, where people are receiving help for those disorders and where we're learning more about the extent of those disorders.

My ministry provides up to \$20,000 per year per pupil to school boards that are working with students who have difficulties that come from ADHD, and I know that we look forward to working with educators in the future, discovering new ways of helping people who have these disorders and helping them in life and in their education process. So I thank the member for that question.

WINTER HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, yesterday you made an entirely inappropriate and unhelpful statement in the House blaming the OPSEU strike for less than adequate winter road maintenance during our most recent spring storm, certainly poor judgement and a shameless shifting of responsibility from where it belongs.

But, Minister, you've shown poor judgement in relation to this issue long before the strike began, initially by admitting to a \$7-million cut in winter road maintenance, which only came to light after we in the opposition forced you to admit it, and then by continually denying that these cuts had any impact on those of us who drive the highways of Ontario. We now learn, Minister, that indeed your budgetary constraints were totally unrealistic. In fact, you were forced to spend millions more than you wanted to because of the severe winter we've all experienced in this province.

Minister, will you now admit your mistake? Will you apologize to the people of Ontario and will you commit to rescinding those cuts for the next fiscal year?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): I will admit to the people of Ontario that this government acted very responsibly, and very fiscally responsibly, because we managed to make sure that our roads were safe throughout a very, very difficult winter. It proves, even with the strike, under the conditions that we've had to work with, the tremendous job that the people have done, and the savings are there. Right from the beginning I said we would spend whatever it would take—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member for Essex South is out of order and out of his seat.

Interjection.

The Speaker: I won't warn him again.

Hon Mr Palladini: Right from the beginning we said this government was going to spend whatever it would need to make sure that our roads are safe, and I believe the people of Ontario know we have done just that.

Mr Gravelle: Don't be embarrassed to admit if you've made a mistake. You've now learned you can't legislate snowfall. You've had the opportunity to travel some of the roads in northern Ontario, I understand, to observe the types of conditions that are faced by northern drivers and all of us on a daily basis. You've received thousands of petitions, hundreds of letters from concerned people and groups, municipalities, resolutions are being passed by municipalities, letters from people like in the township of Schreiber who were concerned about a four-day highway closure that was absolutely unnecessary. Our highways

have never been less well maintained than they were this past year. There's no question about that.

I ask you, for the sake of all Ontarians who have faced the insecurity of hazardous roads this winter and who have felt fear for the safety of their families, their neighbours, their children on school buses, will you commit to bringing back road maintenance to the level that everyone in this province deserves, demands and expects from this or any government?

Hon Mr Palladini: I will commit to two things: that the level of maintenance on our highways is going to be maintained in a safe way, and I will also commit to look for whatever saving we may arrive at from an administrative point, and just doing business in a smarter way. That's something the member across the road doesn't have a clue about.

SEWAGE AND STORMWATER TUNNEL

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the Minister of Environment and Energy. Today I received a tip that you are about to announce a reversal of Ministry of Environment and Energy policy and give the go-ahead to the western beaches tunnel. While I disagree profoundly, I am not surprised. What does surprise me is that apparently the eight terms and conditions that you're placing on the go-ahead for that western beaches tunnel do not include the key environmental issue of coordination of master sewage planning between Metro and Toronto. As Minister of Environment, can you tell me how you justify the exclusion of the most important environmental condition?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Environment and Energy): I thank the honourable member across the way for the question. The member is quite right. Yesterday, in fact, we did make a decision to allow the sewage and stormwater tunnel project to go ahead. We are actually quite pleased with this decision because we think this is very good news for the people of Ontario. We think this is an opportunity to finally establish a method to clean up the beaches in the Toronto area. This is an issue that has been of concern to the people in this area for some time now. We believe we've made an excellent decision, and the approval process is one that we are confident in.

Ms Lankin: I'm sorry, and with all due respect, Minister, from day one you have never understood the issues at stake for the environment here in the Metro area. Once again you're completely incapable of answering the question with respect to coordination of master sewage planning between Metro and Toronto, the issue that has always been at stake. Your recommendations include—excuse the pun—some watered-down version of coordination of storm sewer planning, which has got nothing to do with the environmental concerns raised by sewage planning, the overall system.

This minister is not listening to people, because in fact the representations that have been made time and time again said, "Please don't proceed, but if you're going to proceed without a full environmental assessment, at least place conditions on Toronto and Metro that they must coordinate their master sewage planning."

Will you today give us this commitment, that you will add the condition to your announcement that you're about

to make that before Toronto can proceed with this tank tunnel, it must coordinate master sewer planning with Metro so that we have some environmental approach that makes sense for our lakes, our rivers, our health and our environment, for all the people in Metro?

Hon Mrs Elliott: We are very confident that we've made an excellent decision because we are concerned about the quality of the water in this province. With the decision of going forward with the building of this tunnel, the water quality will be improved to such a degree that beaches that now are open only 25% of the time will be open, we anticipate, 75% of the time.

With regard to the sewage which you are so concerned about, in fact the sewage sludge that will finally be filtered out as it flows through this tunnel amounts to less than 0.5% of all that goes to the Ashbridges Bay facility.

1520

WATER QUALITY

Mrs Barbara Fisher (Bruce): My question today is for the Minister of Environment and Energy. As the minister is aware, last November there was an incident in my riding where abnormal amounts of tritium were released into Lake Huron. Can the minister tell the House today what action has been taken to address this occurrence?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Environment and Energy): To address the concerns that arose as a result of that incident last fall, a steering committee was formed. The steering committee looked at ways to improve the notification and follow-up procedures in such an event. I am pleased to report that as a result of that effort there is now a protocol in place which outlines a series of procedures to deal with such occurrences. It establishes the roles and the responsibilities that we believe will ensure improved responsibility and accountability if such an occurrence were to occur again.

Mrs Fisher: I am pleased to see that the steering committee has responded to the public concern about the safety of drinking water drawn from Lake Huron. Will that protocol be made public?

Hon Mrs Elliott: I would like to thank the members of the committee who acted so quickly and so decisively in this matter. Yes, in fact, the results of that are available to anyone interested in seeing them. I would like to add that the protocol was unanimously approved by representatives from Ontario Hydro, from Bruce township, the local medical officer of health, my ministry, Emergency Measures Ontario and the Ministry of Labour. We believe this will significantly improve the protection and the confidence of those citizens who rely on Lake Huron for their drinking water.

FAMILY SUPPORT PAYMENTS

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): My question is to the Attorney General. The government's bullying tactics seem to know no boundaries. In addition to a long list of people on the government hit list, which has included seniors and children, the government is now preparing to take on single mothers and their children through its expenditure reduction in the family support plan. First

this government floated the idea of charging single parents \$2 just to pick up the phone and dial family support numbers. We now know that the minister is contemplating severe staffing reductions.

My question is simple: Will the minister confirm to this House how many layoffs will result from this decision and what impact this reduction in staffing will have on the enforcement and recovery of delinquent payments?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): On January 29 when the House was convened, I was asked a very similar question about the \$2 fee for family support plan phone call inquiries. I said at that time and I say again that there is no truth to that and it will not happen.

I also said that we are looking at the family support plan so that we can develop a plan that does a better job collecting the almost \$900 million of outstanding payments, mostly owing to women and children by delinquent spouses who have not complied with family support orders. We are being motivated to develop a system that works, that provides fast payment to those within the plan who are awaiting cheques, and that also provides proper collection procedures to collect the huge and escalating outstanding debt.

Mr Sergio: It does not take a genius to figure out that if you reduce the number of people enforcing the provisions under the Family Support Plan Act, the successful collection and recovery of family support payments will be severely affected. Having said this, I would state two important facts which seem to contradict what the minister has stated now and on previous occasions.

First, the real amount of money in arrears is closer to \$551 million, not the \$900 million the minister has suggested. Second, of the \$551 million in arrears, 55% of these cases have funds flowing and the arrears are being paid down.

In light of these statistics, I would ask the minister again if he would reconsider his attack on single women and children and rethink his commitment to slashing the number of front-line office staff.

Hon Mr Harnick: Certainly if the number is \$550 million, it's \$550 million too much. If there are 45% of orders out there in which no funds are flowing, that's 45% too many, and we will be motivated by trying to develop the best system that we can to collect the arrears and to run the family support plan in the most efficient way to ensure that people receive their payments on time and that they are able to obtain the service of the plan when they need it. That's what's motivating any decision-making that we will enter into.

CLEANING SERVICES CONTRACT

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Back to the same minister, the Chair of Management Board, on the issue we've been talking about here. Things seem to be getting curiouser and curiouser. I just spoke with Mr Ferens again, as a result of your answer to my last question, and there seems to be a serious discrepancy between what you say the way things went down and the

way the union sees it, in terms of their discussions with the principal of this corporation.

Mr Ferens advises me, Minister, that he has spoken to all four of the other bidders and all four of them were prepared to recognize the union. This is the only one that wasn't going to recognize the union. Therefore, Minister, we seem to have a legitimate question in terms of the allegation by Mr Ferens that he was told by one of the principals of the corporation that he contacted your office—that is how he qualified through the prequalification process and ultimately was awarded the tender. He was not the lowest. I understand he may not have even been the second lowest.

But given the fact that all of the other bidders, according to the union, were prepared to recognize the union, and there are these questions around the propriety of the process, are you prepared to state today categorically that neither you nor anyone else in your office, nor any involvement in your riding association had anything at all to do with this? Secondly, will you table all the pertinent documents around this so that we can clear it up once and for all?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I can certainly assure you, as a result of the member's questions here today, that I'm going to look into this very thoroughly. I will pass along the information. I can only pass along to you the information that I know, the information that has been given to me by the staff of Management Board.

That information is that the tender that was selected involved the retention of the majority of the staff, and it also made a commitment to negotiate job-sharing arrangements to assure that as many of the staff would be retained as possible. I can only pass along the information. I assure you I'll look into it and I'll make a report. The information I have is, again, that the lowest bidder did not intend to retain the existing staff. That's the information I have. If that information is incorrect, I assure you that I will present the information to this House.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): I'd like to move the weekly business statement for next week.

Pursuant to standing order 55, I wish to indicate the business of the House for the week of March 25, 1996.

Next week, as time permits, we will be dealing with the following legislation:

Third reading of Bill 19, the Advocacy Act; third reading of Bill 20, the Planning Act; second reading of Bill 31, the Ontario College of Teachers Act; second reading of Bill 30, the Education Quality and Accountability Office Act.

For Thursday morning, March 28, private members' business, we will consider ballot number 15, standing in the name of the member for Beaches-Woodbine, and ballot number 16, standing in the name of the member for Lambton.

1530

PETITIONS

CHILD CARE

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I have a petition to the Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Progressive Conservative government has decided to replace our current child care system with one that lacks compassion and common sense and is fraught with many dangerous consequences; and

"Whereas the concept of affordable, accessible and quality child care is a basic, important and fundamental right for many members of our community who are either unemployed and enrolled into a training program or are working single parents or where both parents are working; and

"Whereas if our present provincial government is sincere in getting people back to work, they should recognize the value of the child care component of the Jobs Ontario program and acknowledge the validity of the wage subsidy to the child care workers;

"We therefore, the undersigned residents, business owners and child care workers of Metro community, urge the Progressive Conservative government of Ontario to immediately suspend plans to implement cuts to our present child care programs across our province and to restore funding to the previous levels."

I've signed my signature to this.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have here a petition from numerous people from the city of Timmins, and the petition reads as follows:

"To the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government plans to sell off public services to corporations that will run them for profit; and

"Whereas after the corporate takeover, it will be strictly user-pay for the services we now depend on; and

"Whereas our clean air and water standards and workers' safety rules are being relaxed because corporations don't like rules that interfere with profit; and

"Whereas privatization is being sold as a way to save tax dollars even though large companies pay little or no taxes while individual Canadians pay most of the total tax bill; and

"Whereas Bill 7 was introduced in the interest of facilitating its privatization agenda by stripping public sector workers of the rights to retain fair working conditions when services are transferred or privatized;

"We, the following citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to ban any selloff of Ontario public services and reinstate successor rights to public service employees."

I've signed this petition.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I present this petition on behalf of the member for Kenora, Mr Miclash:

"Whereas the members of the Ontario public service are earnestly attempting to negotiate an equitable and respectful collective agreement with the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas a fair collective agreement is evidence of this government's respect for Ontario's public services, the workers who provide them and those who need them; and

"Whereas by introducing Bill 7 and Bill 26 prior to commencing negotiations, the government removes significant rights from OPSEU members that other workers in Ontario retain; and

"Whereas reducing the size of the civil service can be achieved through attrition without attacking basic rights and dignities of hardworking people;

"We, the following undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to negotiate responsibly and in good faith with the Ontario Public Service Employees Union towards a fair and respectful collective agreement."

Madam Speaker, there are thousands who have signed from the good area of Kenora, Ontario.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE PENSIONS

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): I have the honour today of presenting a petition to the government of Ontario. It is signed by more than 150 concerned citizens in the great riding of Lake Nipigon.

"Whereas Bill 26 exempts the government as an employer from key legislation governing pensions in Ontario; and

"Whereas employees of the Ontario government have been stripped of their right to access pension security, a right that other workers in Ontario have; and

"Whereas this represents the theft of hundreds of millions of dollars in pension benefits from working people; and

"Whereas as a result thousands of workers who face being laid off in the coming months could be forced into poverty;

"We, the following undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to reinstate the rights removed by schedule L of Bill 26."

Simply put, those fine people are asking for the right to be like other Ontarians, simply the right to stay alive.

OMNIBUS LEGISLATION

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas we, the citizens of Ontario, are deeply concerned about Bill 26, the omnibus act to restructure Ontario, and believe that in a democracy government never has the right to use any means to do what it wants, particularly regarding actions which intrude upon every citizen's life, yet this is precisely what Bill 26 proposes; it authorizes the cabinet, with minimal debate, to make

decisions for citizens at any time by amending over 40 laws in 16 areas of vital importance;

"Whereas while most citizens agree with the aim of reducing Ontario's debt, this should not be done behind their backs by undermining the normal and necessary democratic process of open debate and decision-making, and in a democracy the end does not justify the means;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"We urge the government to withdraw the undemocratic and dangerous omnibus Bill 26 and regroup its amendments into separate bills," which they didn't do, "which the public can understand and its elected representatives openly debate."

I'll affix my signature to it.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I have a petition from one of the Metro Housing buildings, Leonardo Court, addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Do not implement user fees and/or copayments to the Ontario drug benefit program. User fees are not the solution; they only deter the most vulnerable from getting the help they really need. These fees will further diminish universal health care in Ontario with the poor and seniors bearing the brunt of your proposed actions."

I sign my signature to this.

ST THOMAS PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL

Mr Peter North (Elgin): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly:

"We, the undersigned, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That a recommendation by the psychiatric hospitals restructuring committee to close the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital be rejected.

"We believe the restructuring committee has not fully considered the case for retaining St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital.

"We believe the hospital and the community of St Thomas provide care and caring for psychiatric patients which is equal to, and better than, London.

"We believe closure of the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital will have a devastating impact on the economy and the residents of St Thomas and Elgin county.

"We believe London can better absorb the impact of closure of the London Psychiatric Hospital.

"Finally, we believe it would be cheaper for government to retain the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital in terms of capital improvements required to both facilities.

"Therefore, we request that the government refrain from endorsing and implementing the recommendation to close the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital."

ROAD SAFETY

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Huron Line/Talbot Road is one of the busiest roads in the province; and

"Whereas over 1.5 million trucks use this portion of the highway each year; and

"Whereas this stretch of highway contains the first set of traffic signals for vehicles which have travelled on a freeway for many hours; and

"Whereas accidents have caused significant hardship to families that have needlessly lost loved ones in tragic accidents;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to urge the Minister of Transportation to recognize the need to make significant changes to reflect the hazards that exist Highway 3/Talbot Road by reducing the speed limit to 70 kilometres per hour and installing advance warning signals to reflect the concerns of the community."

On behalf of the many people from both Windsor and the town of La Salle, I hereby affix my signature.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have here yet another petition where a number of people—I would say probably somewhere around 400 or 500 people—from the city of Timmins have sent a petition to this government. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the members of the Ontario public service are earnestly attempting to negotiate an equitable and respectful collective agreement with the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas a fair collective agreement is evidence of this government's respect for Ontario's public services, the workers who provide them and those who need them; and

"Whereas by introducing Bill 7 and Bill 26 prior to commencing negotiations, the government removed significant rights from OPSEU members that other workers in Ontario retain; and

"Whereas reducing the size of the civil service can be achieved through attrition without attacking basic rights and dignities of hardworking people;

"We, the following undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to negotiate responsibly and in good faith with the Ontario Public Service Employees Union towards a fair and respectful collective agreement."

I have signed that petition and support their cause.

1540

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I have a petition signed by approximately 100 people.

"To the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the members of the Ontario public service are earnestly attempting to negotiate an equitable and respectful collective agreement with the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas a fair collective agreement is evidence of this government's respect for Ontario's public services, the workers who provide them and those who need them; and

"Whereas by introducing Bill 7 and Bill 26 prior to commencing negotiations the government removed significant rights from OPSEU members that other workers in Ontario retain; and

"Whereas reducing the size of the civil service can be achieved through attrition without attacking basic rights and dignities of hardworking people;

"We, the following undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to negotiate responsibly and in good faith with the Ontario Public Service Employees Union towards a fair and respectful collective agreement."

I affix my name to this petition.

JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I have a petition here in support of junior kindergarten, as junior kindergarten has been axed all across the province by this government.

"Whereas the Conservative government's stated plan in the Common Sense Revolution is to improve the long-term economic prospects of Ontario; and

"Whereas research from all over the world shows early childhood education leads to lower dropout rates, improved reading, math and language skills, less chance of future unemployment, teen pregnancy or delinquency and higher enrolment in post-secondary education, thus resulting in a better-educated, highly skilled workforce; and

"Whereas this Conservative government states it is committed to ensuring a larger share of the education dollar goes to the classroom; and

"Whereas this Conservative government fully expects boards to meet transfer reductions by cutting costs outside the classroom; and

"Whereas this Conservative government has made junior kindergarten a matter of choice for local boards and has reduced the funding for junior kindergarten;

"Therefore, to ensure this Conservative government meets its stated commitments in regard to education and to Ontario, we, the undersigned, call on the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Education and Training to restore the funding for junior kindergarten to its previous level and require all school boards to offer junior kindergarten classes."

I affix my name to this important petition.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I have another petition from the Metro Housing company. This particular building is Westdon Apartments, 6250 Bathurst Street. It reads:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Do not implement user fees and/or copayments to the Ontario drug benefit program. User fees are not the solution. They only deter the most vulnerable from getting the help they really need. These fees will further diminish universal health care in Ontario, with the poor and seniors bearing the brunt of your proposed actions."

I accompany a whole roll of hundreds of people who have signed with respect to these cuts, and I submit them to you as well.

JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a petition which has been presented to me with the request

I present it to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas this Conservative government's stated plan in the Common Sense Revolution is to improve the long-term economic prospects for Ontario; and

"Whereas research from all over the world shows early childhood education leads to lower dropout rates, improved reading, math and language skills, less chance of future unemployment, teen pregnancy or delinquency and higher enrolment in post-secondary education, thus resulting in a better-educated, highly skilled workforce; and

"Whereas this Conservative government states it is committed to ensuring a larger share of the education dollar goes to the classroom; and

"Whereas this Conservative government fully expects boards to meet transfer reductions by cutting costs outside the classroom; and

"Whereas this Conservative government has made junior kindergarten a matter of choice for local school boards and has reduced the funding for junior kindergarten;

"Therefore, to ensure this Conservative government meets its stated commitments in regard to education and to Ontario, we, the undersigned, call on the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Education and Training to restore the funding for junior kindergarten to its previous level and require all school boards to offer junior kindergarten classes."

I present this to the assembly and affix my signature to it.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Time for one last petition. The member for Essex-Kent.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Whoa. Rotation. There is another party over here.

The Acting Speaker: I am so sorry, I see a member from the NDP caucus. The member for Hamilton Centre.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I'll have to take a look at the seating arrangements.

ST JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): "Whereas the Hamilton-Wentworth health action task force, as part of their report, has recommended the closure of St Joseph's Hospital in Hamilton; and

"Whereas it is recognized the health care system should be made as efficient as possible; and

"Whereas the quality of health care service in our community should not be sacrificed in the name of efficiency; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government promised to protect the quality of health care in Ontario; and

"Whereas we, the undersigned, believe that maintaining the presence of St Joseph's Hospital in downtown Hamilton is a vital component of our health care system;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Minister of Health and the Hamilton-Wentworth District Health Council ensure the continuance of St Joseph's Hospital at its present site."

I add my name to theirs.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Thank you very much, and please accept my apology again.

VISITORS

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): I want to recognize an eminent Antiguan, Winston Derrick, and Dr Knolly Hill, in the audience, who are visiting us today.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Pursuant to the order of the House of November 16, 1995, Mr Curling presented a report from the standing committee on estimates.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Pursuant to standing order 60(b), the report of the committee is deemed to be received and the estimates of the ministries and offices named therein as not being selected for consideration by the committee are deemed to be concurred in.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ADVOCACY, CONSENT

AND SUBSTITUTE DECISIONS

STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1995

LOI DE 1995 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'INTERVENTION,
LE CONSENTEMENT ET LA PRISE
DE DÉCISIONS AU NOM D'AUTRUI

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for third reading of Bill 19, An Act to repeal the Advocacy Act, 1992, revise the Consent to Treatment Act, 1992, amend the Substitute Decisions Act, 1992 and amend other Acts in respect of related matters / *Projet de loi 19, Loi abrogeant la Loi de 1992 sur l'intervention, révisant la Loi de 1992 sur le consentement au traitement, modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur la prise de décisions au nom d'autrui et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui concerne des questions connexes.*

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I started on this debate yesterday, which is Bill 19, which is called the Advocacy, Consent and Substitute Decisions Statute Law Amendment Act. I did start my comments with respect to this bill and I'd like to perhaps summarize.

I might say at the outset, for the purposes of the members present and those listening, that my comments will be restricted with respect to the substitute decisions part of the bill. There will be other members of our caucus who will be speaking with respect to the repeal of the advocacy legislation and the consent-to-treatment part of it. So there will be other speakers to follow from our caucus.

With respect to the substitute decisions part of the bill, the amendments include the following:

They retain the basic principles of the legislation that was passed by the previous government: respect for personal choice and enhancement of the dignity of mentally incapable people.

It responds to intense public concerns about potential government interference with powers of attorney.

It clarifies that the private arrangements people make to plan for possible future incapacity will have first priority; in other words, arrangements with respect to members of an individual's family will have priority. If there is no one left, the government will intervene.

It provides for more opportunity and easier processes for a family to become a substitute decision-maker if an advanced planning has not occurred.

It streamlines procedures, reduces bureaucratic red tape and complexity and reflects this government's belief that the majority of family members, service providers and caregivers are acting in good faith and with good intentions.

1550

It eliminates the involvement of the expensive, intrusive professional advocate in the procedures for appointing guardians. There's no question that topic generated the most debate during the committee hearings and during second reading debate and will during third reading debate, particularly from the third party, but we believe this is the route to go.

It clarifies that the public guardian and trustee will act as a guardian only as a last resort, when there is a critical need and there is no other suitable person available or willing to act.

Finally, it facilitates the involvement of local community volunteers in providing assistance with guardianship and services.

So the general intent of the issue with respect to the substitute decisions part of it is, to the government, as it is with other portions of the bill, that the province intervenes only as a last resort.

I did make some comments, and I'll try not to repeat too much of what I said yesterday. Perhaps I could start off to indicate why we are amending the Substitute Decisions Act. It was a belief, after hearing from individuals around this province, not only the hearings that took place by the previous government but our own consultations by members of this House of whatever political party, that the law was filled with gaps and inconsistencies. For example, we discovered that there was no easy way for families to get legal authority to make financial decisions for their mentally incapable loved ones who had not made powers of attorney. In those situations, families would always have to go to court.

Currently, there are procedures that exist in the Substitute Decisions Act that allow people who are affected to challenge or appeal the appointment of a guardian. The law at present requires that information about legal rights be given in a personal visit from an independent advocate acting on behalf of the Advocacy Commission. We believe that the current law goes too far and creates overly complicated rules and procedures that confuse many people. We discovered, in discussing this with caregivers, doctors, nurses, members of family, that they were terribly confused as to who they were to take instructions from and what they were to do when confronted with the requirement of assisting incapable people.

In some cases, government could interfere in people's private affairs even when they had made powers of attorney. We discovered later that when powers of

attorney were made, when someone who was fully competent named an individual to act on their behalf, made that power of attorney, an advocate under the Advocacy Commission had priority over that person. We found that totally unacceptable.

In the last two years, thousands of Ontarians have expressed concern about the complexity of the rules and the potential for government interference in people's private affairs. Our government has listened to those concerns and we have made changes to simplify the rules. The changes to the Substitute Decisions Act we believe will reduce barriers to family members and friends who look after incapable loved ones. We believe that they will simplify and streamline procedures. They reflect our government's belief that most caregivers, service providers and family members have the best interests of the mentally incapable people they care for at heart.

These changes are about providing rules that will work for everyone, whose situations are all unique. I think that was the problem with respect to the previous legislation: It was assumed that many situations were the same. They're not the same. Each family has a different situation, each mentally incapable person had a different problem, and those service providers and family members are those who can best serve the needs of those people.

The rules will be less rigid. They will allow greater flexibility for dealing with situations in humane ways.

I would like to emphasize one issue, as I did yesterday, and that is, for all of those people who have signed powers of attorney—and there were many. Thousands of powers of attorney were issued by the previous government across this province. Many people took advantage of that and have used those powers of attorney. Those existing powers of attorney that they signed privately and those that they signed in the presence of their lawyers, that were prepared by their lawyers, will not be invalidated by the amendments of this legislation. No one who has already made a valid power of attorney will need to make a new one as a result of the amendments.

Perhaps I could say a few words with respect to the topic of statutory guardianship, which is a concept that I think everyone in Ontario will be glad to see. Relatives of mentally incapable people will be able to become statutory guardians more easily. Previously, only immediate family, such as a spouse, a sibling or a child, could apply to be a statutory guardian. Under the new law, any relative will be eligible to apply. For example, many elderly people in this province do not have any immediate family, but they may have an extended family who are willing to become involved in making decisions for them, for example, in-laws, a daughter-in-law, a nephew, a niece, who would be quite prepared to assist, particularly elderly people. Those people, under the amendments, will now be able to assist elderly people who wish assistance with respect to their affairs.

In those cases, we believe it is inappropriate for the government or any agency of the government to become involved. We are making it easier for extended family members to take responsibility for their incapable relatives. Under the amendments of this legislation, anyone related by blood, marriage or adoption can apply to become statutory guardian of an incapable person. The

posting of security will no longer be mandatory, as it was in the previous legislation. Powers of attorney will no longer be terminated if a person is assessed as being mentally incapable.

Finally, and this is the most important of our amendments we believe, the power of attorney will take precedence over the public guardian and trustee. So no longer, as it was in the previous legislation, will the public guardian and trustee or an advocate or anyone connected to the government be able to interfere with the decisions of a properly appointed power of attorney who is acting under the wishes of an individual who has named a person as his or her attorney.

With respect to personal care decision-making, unnecessary barriers to using powers of attorney for personal care are being removed. For example, the amendments of our government will eliminate the validation of process for these documents, an expensive, complicated and time-consuming process that required two capacity assessments, completion of a guardianship plan and a visit from a paid government advocate. An attorney for personal care will still only be able to use the power of attorney when the person who gave the power of attorney is mentally incapable of making personal care decisions.

More flexibility will be allowed in making powers of attorney for personal care. For example, a person will be able to make more than one power of attorney for personal care, naming different attorneys for different decision-making roles. There may, for example, be a different need for personal care decisions. You may have a daughter or a son who would look after the decisions with respect to personal hygiene. You may have another daughter or another son who would look after decision-making that's required for hospital care or for long-term care.

1600

Protection of legal rights: The involvement of the expensive and intrusive professional advocate in procedures for appointing guardians will be eliminated. However, the law will require that information about legal rights be provided to people for whom a guardian is appointed. This information will be provided in a faster and less intrusive and bureaucratic manner by the person who is applying to be his or her guardian. The level of information provided to mentally incapable people about their legal rights will still be the highest level of rights information required by law anywhere in Canada for substitute decision-making.

With respect to court-appointed guardians, we are removing the ban on service providers as guardians of the person for personal care. The ban will continue with respect to guardianship of property with respect to service providers. This government believes that this ban is unnecessarily arbitrary and that the courts should have the discretion to appoint them where appropriate. We are confident that judges can decide what is best for the person in the circumstances and address any potential conflicts.

We are doing this to make the law more flexible for the people in Ontario. For example, in some limited circumstances where a person has no one else willing or available to act for them, a service provider who is

familiar with the person and knows and understands his or her wishes and beliefs would be a more appropriate guardian than the official guardian and public trustee. An example might be a home care provider who had lived with a senior or other person for a number of years and knows that person's wishes. Normally, we discovered as a result of the hearings, most service providers would not want to take on that responsibility because of liability and other reasons, but it certainly provides the option where there is no one else available who might be the best person in exceptional circumstances.

The role of the public guardian and trustee: No question, this role has been minimized with respect to action in that the public guardian and trustee will only get involved if there is no family person or other person who's available to care for the incapable person.

One fear that was expressed by many people about the Substitute Decisions Act was that the public guardian and trustee would intervene in people's private lives unnecessarily. We have received many letters and telephone calls criticizing the law for not putting sufficient safeguards in place to ensure that the public guardian and trustee only became involved in situations of current urgent need. We are correcting this.

The new law emphasizes the last-resort role of the public guardian and trustee in several ways. It will ensure the court does not appoint the public guardian and trustee as guardian unless there is no other suitable person who is willing and able to be appointed. Private arrangements made through powers of attorney will override statutory guardianship.

The new law by our government will clarify what steps the public guardian and trustee will need to take with investigations of abuse or neglect. This will allow the public guardian and trustee to focus its efforts on the most serious cases of abuse and neglect. This will reduce unnecessary government intervention in the private lives of individuals and their families. The public guardian and trustee will be able to focus its efforts and resources on serving those people who have a critical need for assistance.

I spent some time yesterday talking about the public input with respect to this legislation and I won't repeat those comments other than to say that I would like to thank the more than 150 individuals and organizations that provided feedback on the amendments that came out of the public hearings and the consultations we had during the month of February. I would like also, on behalf of the government, to thank all members of the standing committee on administration of justice, including my friends in the opposition. All three political parties certainly provided a worthwhile contribution to the hearings.

The comments and suggestions that we heard from people around this province were most helpful in refining and improving Bill 19 to ensure that it serves the people of Ontario in the best way possible. For example, we heard over and over again that people were concerned that allowing the children of people granting powers of attorney to be witnesses might lead to abuses, that there might be conflicts of interest. We listened to these criticisms and therefore indicated amendments, which I

think were approved unanimously by all three parties, that children of people given powers of attorney will not be allowed to witness their parents' powers of attorney.

We also heard comments about the need for guardians of property to take into account personal care needs. We therefore added a provision that will require guardians of property to take into account the effect their actions will have on the incapable person's health, safety, shelter, nutrition, clothing and hygiene when making decisions about the person's property. These are only a few examples of the changes that have been made as a result of the input from the public hearings that went on during the month of February. Our government has listened and has made changes to refine and improve the original provisions of Bill 19.

Those are my comments with respect to that portion of the bill which deals with the Substitute Decisions Act. As I indicated, other colleagues from the government will be talking on the other two parts of the bill. But I will say that we believe that the changes we have made with respect to the substitute decisions part of it, the powers of attorney part of it, protect the rights and interests of mentally incapable persons and of physically disabled persons; they support the important role family and friends and those who provide services to and people who volunteer with vulnerable people play in their lives. Changes to the Substitute Decisions Act promote respect for personal choice and enhancement of the dignity of mentally incapable persons. They limit the role of government to situations where there is an urgent need.

I thank you for allowing me to make these few comments, and I know that there will be further debate on this topic. I encourage all members of the House to support this legislation because I think it will enhance the requirements of the mentally incapable people around this province.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Questions and/or comments? You have up to two minutes.

Mr Bill Grimmer (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I'm pleased to comment on the remarks of my colleague on this bill, which is actually a matter that's of some interest to me. In my other life, I am a small-town lawyer, and as such I've had an opportunity to deal with powers of attorney during my 12 years in practice. It is a matter of great interest to people in rural Ontario, and this legislation I'm sure is going to provide considerable relief to people who were very concerned about many of the things that my colleague has mentioned.

In particular, I want to applaud the thoroughness of the consultation process which I believe has taken place and which my colleague has alluded to. The matter of making sure that witnesses no longer need to know the capability of the donor, this is a very important practical matter. When you're dealing with powers of attorney in rural Ontario, it is sometimes difficult enough to find people who can sign as witnesses, let alone to indicate to them that they have to have some knowledge of the capability of the donor on a power of attorney.

I think it's also very important that the people of Ontario be assured that the power of attorney that they already have is going to continue to be in place without any need to amend it. Certainly in my practice, at the

time that the legislation was passed by the previous government, I found that there was a considerable amount of hysteria on the part of the public, who were very concerned that Big Brother was going to take their property away. Many of them had already put in place powers of attorney, and I can say that they came flooding into my office. It was a time of considerable growth in my practice, and I would like to thank the previous government for that contribution.

1610

Mr John L. Parker (York East): I'm pleased to rise this afternoon and give my concurrence to the remarks of my honourable friend on the subject of powers of attorney and the Substitute Decisions Act. In particular, I want to emphasize one very important reform that is carried in this legislation, and that is to do away with the formality and the provision of registering and validating powers of attorney.

As with my friend from Muskoka-Georgian Bay, I'm a lawyer in real life and it has been my experience that people are confused and frustrated by the provision in the current law that provides that at the very moment when your power of attorney is most important, at the time when a person is found to be mentally incapable, at the very moment when you want your power of attorney to take effect and to protect your rights, that is the very moment under the current regime when everything is thrown up for grabs and raised into question as you have to go through the process of determining whether the power of attorney has been appropriately validated, or whether it should be struck down and whether the official guardian should take over, or whether the original attorney can carry on carrying out the duties that the donor intended that attorney to carry out.

We've removed all that confusion, we've removed all that doubt under the current bill, which says that when you sign a power of attorney and appoint someone else as your attorney to take responsibility for your matters, you mean what you say, and that power of attorney will stay in effect despite and in light of any subsequent mental incapacity. That's the whole point of a power of attorney, to know that you've given your affairs over to someone else you trust and you will have confidence in them to carry out your decisions for you.

That's what the new act does and for that reason alone it merits the attention of this House.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you very much for your comments. Your time is up. Further questions or comments? Seeing none, would the member for Dufferin-Peel like to respond.

Mr Tilson: I'd like to thank the members from Muskoka-Georgian Bay and York East for their comments with respect to the introductory comments on this bill. I think the members have emphasized what we have tried to do with this legislation. We believe that there was too much governance, it was too costly, too much intrusion by the province of Ontario when matters should be left to members of one's family to process these matters.

There was also the emphasis that this part of the bill, the substitute decisions part of the bill, was actually supported by all parties in the last House. The need for

signing a power of attorney is very important. In the past people said, "When you become a senior and you become on the verge of incompetence, it's wise to have a power of attorney," but I think we've seen throughout all the many hearings that have gone back through—the hearings of the former government and the hearings we've had ourselves, our own hearings—there is a need from all ages because anything can happen. It's a document everyone should consider entering into for the protection not only of the dealing with one's property but also of the dealing with respect to personal care.

The whole issue of witnesses that I think was raised by my friend from Muskoka-Georgian Bay created much confusion and concern because what the previous legislation essentially meant was that witnesses would have to warrant the capabilities of the person who was signing the attorney. It would get to the stage where no one would sign those documents, so we took that requirement away, and we believe that and other things make it much easier with respect to the processing of powers of attorney.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): It's good to have an opportunity to get up and speak on this bill, and I want to begin by complimenting my colleague from Dufferin-Peel on his thoughtful presentation to the House and members of the government committee who travelled the province to discuss this bill and the importance of the bill to all of us.

Let me begin by saying that I did not have the opportunity to travel the entire time with the committee, but I did spend one week, went to the great cities of Thunder Bay, Ottawa, London and, my favourite place in this entire province, the great city of Windsor. We heard delegations that represented a range of views, a range of thoughtful comments. I was most impressed at how the committee dealt with what I felt were the real issues in here, and moreover, it was refreshing to see issues where all of us could agree and work together.

For me, having the opportunity to participate in that committee, even though it was for a week, reaffirmed my own faith in our legislative process, because that had been terribly shaken by the arbitrary and, I felt, hurtful way in which the government proceeded with Bill 26. I was pleased that we were able to begin to do meaningful committee work and study issues.

I see my colleague the minister responsible for the WCB, who has undertaken to do consultations prior to legislation, has undertaken to do committee hearings once this legislation is brought in to reform the bill, and we will have a chance to deal with the substance of that, but we here in the opposition welcome the opportunity to have committee hearings and have the opportunity to discuss very important pieces of legislation in a meaningful and constructive way.

I don't want to spend a lot of time reviewing the act. I think my colleague opposite did a good job of that. But I do want to spend a few minutes talking about the broader sections in it.

First, the repeal of the Advocacy Act, which is the first part of this bill. Members of course are aware on all sides of the House that our party supported that view in the election and we continue to support that view. So we are

pleased with that section of the act and we are pleased to have the opportunity to be able to discuss the other parts of the act, the second part, the Health Care Consent Act, 1995, which replaces and repeals the Consent to Treatment Act, 1992.

We are of the view that while we had problems with certain sections and presented a number of amendments and indeed supported a number of amendments that the government brought through, we overall were pleased to have the opportunity to discuss these issues.

I remember in 1992, when the original NDP bills were brought forward, there was tremendous confusion and fear and lack of understanding and there clearly had to be a response by whatever new government took power last year. The members opposite won the election and have begun to address these issues.

The Health Care Consent Act will provide a list of things that do not constitute treatment for the purpose of the act, and then it goes on to explain those things, and we have no problem with that. Of course, it provides definitional things which we too have no serious problem with. Interestingly, the act has updated the definition of health practitioner, and further, it also creates the presumption of capacity for all persons, which is I think a very significant and important presumption that all of us can respect.

When we met with delegations in the cities that I was in, we heard a lot of different views around a whole bunch of different things. I was struck by the thoughtful approach that the health care practitioners took in their presentations and the legal practitioners took in their presentations, which I felt brought very substantive comments to the bill. I must say, I was pleased that the government was receptive to those presentations and indeed acted on a number of the comments that they had.

We believe that should be the approach to government overall. We wish that the government had taken that approach from the beginning and didn't subject this province and the people of this province to the types of things they did earlier on in Bill 7 and Bill 26. We think that if public policy is conducted in that manner, the tenor of the times will be toned down. The unfortunate incidents we've witnessed here today, we think and believe very firmly are the direct results not just of what the government is doing, but how the government is doing it.

1620

We think and believe very strongly that all of us can benefit from an approach to governance that is not deliberately provocative and that allows opportunity for people who are affected by legislation and regulation to have the opportunity for meaningful input. The input we heard in Thunder Bay came from a variety of groups: a number of groups which didn't agree with the bill, others that supported the thrust of the bill but that had certain amendments or comments they wanted to get on the record or urged the government to deal with. Those people came from all walks of life. Many were themselves advocates. Others were persons who suffer from disability. But all were people who had something in meaningful input to put into it.

The new act, you'll be aware, also removes all references to rights and advisers and eliminates all require-

ments that rights advice or notices respecting rights advice be provided to a person who is found by a health practitioner to be incapable with respect to a treatment. We had some difficulty with this issue. In fact, we had long and I felt fruitful discussions around the notion of the obligation of a practitioner and what he or she must tell his or her patient. So that part of the act we do have some difficulty with.

Under the new act, a health practitioner is entitled to presume that consent to a treatment includes consent to a variation or adjustment in the treatment or to continuation of the treatment in a different setting if the risks and benefits are not significantly different as a result of the variation, adjustment or change of setting. That, of course, is in section 11 of the act, and we don't see a particular problem with that either.

Again, I want to come back to this notion of how we govern ourselves. I felt that the whole process surrounding Bill 19 was well conducted. I think about it relative to some of the things that have gone on in education, for instance. The Minister of Education has talked a lot about the changes in his toolkit and the things that need to be done, and a number of members have had the opportunity to travel through schools in their ridings.

During the break, when the House wasn't sitting and we were working in our constituencies or serving on committees, I took the opportunity to visit a number of schools in my riding. There are a number of great schools in my riding. In fact, one of the things that I found most disconcerting in my travels was what I would call the level of fear and anxiety both in parents and teachers, and indeed in the students in those schools.

The teachers in our schools make a great contribution. Indeed, there were a number of teachers, I believe, who appeared before the committee on Bill 19, and their morale is very low right now with all the layoff notices that are going out across the province to cut classroom spending, spending which the government in the last election said they wouldn't cut. Thousands of notices have gone out. Teachers are concerned because there's an impression being granted that they don't earn their livings, that they don't go the extra mile.

I was pleased to meet with a number of different teachers. One of the schools I went to is named after the Honourable W.C. Kennedy, a former federal cabinet minister from our city. I had the chance to spend time with those teachers, who, like the rest of us, are very concerned about Bill 19. But it was good to have the opportunity to meet people like Mrs Hargreaves, who in addition to her regular teaching responsibilities is the cheerleading sponsor teacher, the fashion show sponsor teacher and the junior girls' volleyball sponsor teacher, an example of a teacher who goes well beyond the obligations in their contract. I met Mrs Weale, who's in the Kennedy Booster Club. That's the club that's been raising money in that school to provide computers.

I had the opportunity to watch and read President Clinton's State of the Union address in the United States.

Mr Tony Clement (Brampton South): The era of big government is over.

Mr Duncan: The era of big government is over. That's absolutely right. He laid out six challenges, Mr

Clement, and one of them is that every school and library in the United States will have a computer and be on the Internet by the year 2000, a very progressive and moderate approach. I was struck when a couple of weeks later this government cut—

Mr Parker: What did he have to say about Bill 19?

Mr Duncan: The Americans With Disabilities Act he supports, it is an interesting statute, and frankly, I think the government did a good job in reflecting some of those realities into Bill 19.

But two weeks after that moderate President, who responds to the neo-conservative movement in his country, set the challenge to establish computers, our government cut all capital funding for schools. A government that brought in Bill 19, we think in good conscience, and did a good job with it—we would like to see it look at economic development in the same way, to take that approach.

I note Mr Clement obviously read the president's State of the Union address and agreed with it. Perhaps he would agree that Mr Clinton's response to the neo-conservative movement in the United States is the type of response that all of us should have a careful look at, because there are ways to balance the budget; there are ways to deal with the problems that confront us without doing it on the backs of the poor.

Mr Clement is aware of that speech, so he'd also be aware that in the United States the public service has been cut by over 200,000 in the last three years, and not a day was lost to strikes—no bloodshed, no walkouts, no work-to-rule. Why? I would submit that government treats its employees with respect and justice, something that this government knows very little about.

Under part II of the act, the eighth explanatory note, for instance, says that under this act, "...if a plan of treatment is developed for a person, one health practitioner may, on behalf of all the health practitioners involved in the plan, propose the plan to the person, determine the person's capacity with respect to the plan and ensure that consent is obtained to the plan."

That really isn't much of a change from the previous statute, but one that we feel comfortable with as well.

We talk about employment levels. I listened with great interest yesterday to government members talk about the various forms of investment and job creation that have happened in this province, and the 31,000 jobs that happened in February. We do hope that continues, because we think job creation ought to be the priority. No doubt the government members feel that their plan will help create jobs and in the long term will benefit all of us.

I'm reminded of Lord Keynes's famous statement, "In the long run, we're all dead." He said that in his *A Treatise on Money*, not in the general theory. That was an interesting comment, because it's our view that when you are dealing with public policy and you're dealing with important laws and regulations that deal with the lives of people, you must proceed cautiously, recognizing the impact of your decisions and trying to ensure that the consequences of your decisions are shared fairly and equitably. We are not convinced that the government recognizes that.

Under the existing Consent to Treatment Act, if an application is made to the board for review of a finding of incapacity or for appointment of a representative for an incapable person and the board renders a decision in the matter, the health practitioner is prohibited from administering the treatment during the seven-day period from commencing an appeal of the board's decision. Under the new act, the health practitioner is not prohibited from administering the treatment during this period unless one of the parties indicates to the health practitioner that he or she intends to appeal.

We heard about this clause in Ottawa. Ottawa is a very interesting city, because Ottawa is suffering right now from relatively high unemployment related to the downsizing of the federal government.

1630

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): Sixty thousand. Much worse than ours.

Mr Duncan: It's 45,000, as I understand it. Again, a very short strike and fair severance and fair treatment of the workers—very fair treatment of the workers. The government of Ontario, in its plan, doesn't deal with cities like Ottawa and the impact that mass layoffs in the public service will have. They've ignored Ottawa, as a matter of fact. In Ottawa, of course, the high-tech sector is developing quite well. It has been developing and I believe there's a great future for the high-tech sector in Ottawa.

But this government isn't interested in the high-tech sector. This government is solely interested in a slash-and-burn approach to the economy that will cost jobs and, I submit, will cost investment in the long term. They will try to argue that investment is up and they will point to little examples here and there, but I think when all is said and done, in two years we will find that this province will be back into a major recession, that investment will be down and that that recession will cost people jobs. Their plan simply won't work.

We were so interested when Mr Stockwell was quoted as saying that a quarter of the Tory caucus doesn't support the tax cut. That was fascinating. I wonder who those 20 or 21 members are and if they will stand up and say, "We were wrong."

Mr Grimmer: Madam Speaker, I raise a point of order on rule 23 in the orders of this House, which reads, "In debate, a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she directs his or her speech to matters other than the question under discussion." That's set out in section 23(b)(i). I say with respect, Madam Speaker, that the member is attempting to disguise his remarks as a thinly veiled comment on the legislation.

The Acting Speaker: No, you're incorrect. Would the member please sit down and I'll explain why. I believe the member is connecting the rule in this case that he's not sticking to the subject at hand. I'm listening very carefully and so far I have seen the connection that he is making. I will, however, continue to pay close attention, and if I should determine that he's off topic, he will be directed.

Would you continue, please.

Mr Duncan: Thank you. I've never had a problem speaking for 90 minutes, but standing in one place presents a real challenge.

I must say, everything is interrelated; it is. I mean, your plan—

The Acting Speaker: Would the member for Windsor-Walkerville direct his comments to the Chair, please.

Mr Duncan: I apologize. Madam Chair, the government's plan was, by its own words, a plan. It was a whole document, and the repeal of the Advocacy Act and the Consent to Treatment Act, and the new Health Care Consent Act were all part of that document.

On the other hand, point 10 of the explanatory notes—I'll take a moment to talk about that—says:

"With respect to the scheme for determining who is authorized to give or refuse consent to a treatment on an incapable person's behalf, the new act still provides a list of possible substitute decision-makers and ranks the persons on the list. However, parents and children are ranked equally and statements by family members are no longer required."

Again, we think that is a positive development in the bill and, unlike many other things that this government has done, we find that good public policy—good public policy as contrasted to the damage that's been inflicted on the enforcement of health and safety in this province, for instance. This particular section, in our view, represents good public policy.

I also attended with the committee in the city of London, Ontario. We heard some very thoughtful presentations from health care practitioners in that community. London, of course, is a great centre of health care not only in this province, but indeed I would suggest around the world it's recognized. Those practitioners had interesting and important comments to make about all aspects of Bill 19. While I was there I was reminded of the protest that had happened in London in November. I was reminded what happens when you don't proceed with a bill the way we've proceeded with Bill 19. Bill 19 and the committee hearings were subsequent to Bill 26 and Bill 7, but we see that when a government holds public hearings and is prepared to listen to delegations and deal with their concerns, the nature of the response from those who don't support the government is entirely different.

After Bill 7, organized labour and working people in this province were threatened and have begun a series of walkouts in our major industrial centres, walkouts that in conjunction with the strikes that are going on in our public sector as well as the strikes that are going on in our private sector, we think ultimately will undermine the investment climate of the province.

I want to just turn my attention for a few moments to part III of the bill, the Substitute Decisions Act of 1992, and the amendments that are made to that particular statute. First I want to talk for a moment with regard to number one. With respect to the formalities of executing a power of attorney, the bill would remove the requirement that a witness have no reason to believe the grantor to be incapable of giving the power of attorney. Again, we supported that, continue to support it, and believe that it is a good piece of public policy and are prepared to support the government on that particular section.

The Substitute Decisions Act, again of 1992, we felt and what we heard—and unlike my colleague opposite I did not have a lot of involvement with this particular act prior to coming to the Legislature; indeed the week I spent with the committee was very educating because in addition to what I had heard in the public press and from constituents about the various pieces of legislation that were adopted in 1992, one had a general sense that there was confusion, there was misunderstanding, that they were overly bureaucratic and cumbersome, to paraphrase what my colleague from Dufferin-Peel said. So one has to say that this government, had it been our party or the third party or indeed the governing party as it is today, had to deal, in our view, with these issues. We put forward a number of amendments, as I understand it, in committee of the whole and I believe a number of the government members supported those amendments and agreed in general with us.

I'm glad I've had the opportunity to speak to Bill 19 today because Bill 19 represents to me how government can work and how Parliament, and how members of provincial Parliament particularly, can be involved in the setting of public policy. Too often we hear members express their frustration. It was interesting yesterday; it was obvious that the government caucus had not been consulted about a public inquiry into the violence that had gone on here. Indeed the Premier and the Minister of Finance said that yesterday. We on this side of the House suspect that many of the members who aren't part of the cabinet, aren't part of the treasury bench, feel frustrated and not involved. Yesterday was but one example. So when government brings forward legislation—

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): Bill 26.

Mr Duncan: Bill 26 we spoke about earlier, and is a very good example of how not to do public policy. Even if you can support everything that was in that bill, much of it was lost not only due to the substantive problems with the bill but to the process by which the bill was originally brought in and the way the hearings were conducted. But this bill, Bill 19, shows in my view unequivocally that members of provincial Parliament and the government can do public policy in a forthright and honest manner and effect what we believe to be overall positive change in areas that are of sweeping importance to many, many people in our province.

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I conclude my remarks by saying I hope that the government in the future, as it deals with important issues—and we will disagree, no doubt, substantively on many of them—will conduct themselves the way they conducted themselves on Bill 19: have open public hearings across the province, public hearings that are agreed to without having to shut down the Legislature, public hearings that allow meaningful input, where corrections to the statute in question can be dealt with in a fair and honest way, where all parties can hopefully, where there is agreement, agree.

So I look forward to dealing with WCB reform in the same manner. The minister responsible has given me his assurance that the legislation he brings forward will be subject to public hearings across the province. We look forward to that and a range of other issues, because when

government conducts its public policy properly, no matter what one says or believes about the substance of the issue, if people have an opportunity to be heard and if there is meaningful input, then at the end of the day the government, through its majority, can invoke its will but cannot be accused of not having adequate opportunity for people to have input.

Mr Parker: I think I recognized somewhere over the course of the preceding discussion—somewhere in there were some remarks concerning Bill 19, interspersed randomly among remarks concerning school teachers, Bill Clinton, budget cuts within the province, budget cuts at the Ottawa level, WCB reforms and Bill 26. But when I was able to discern some remarks that were on topic, on the subject of Bill 19, I think I detected unqualified support for the government's innovations in Bill 19 and support for Bill 19 as a whole, for which I am grateful to the member, whose support is most welcome. I'll be looking forward to noting the honourable member's vote when this matter is called to a vote.

But I would want just to suggest to the Speaker and perhaps suggest to the members present that if we're subjected too often to the kind of rambling comments that we were just witness to on all these various subjects that had nothing to do with the matter at hand, I may be tempted to rise in my place and request that the Speaker invoke standing order 144, which is the standing order that says that when an honourable member speaks at length without getting to the point or without having the decency even to toss in any half-decent jokes in the middle of the commentary, then the governing party will no longer be obligated to maintain quorum in this House.

Mr Crozier: I want to thank the member for York East for repeating some of the very important subject matter that my colleague had brought up. What he doesn't understand, of course, because he hasn't been here as long as I have—and I'm a veteran of only a few more days than he—is that when you're dealing with a government like this, you never know when they're going to bring in a motion to limit debate. Therefore, we have to take every opportunity we can to speak out on behalf of the citizens of the province of Ontario, and it's for that reason that on occasion you have to touch on some of the other areas. But I do think that my colleague expressed himself well.

I congratulate you when you see that we do support this bill in its general thrust. I know in Essex South I have a number of senior citizens who were quite concerned when the consent bill was first brought in, and I think anything that can be said and done by this government which will simplify that, why, the members of my constituency, the residents in Essex South, will appreciate it very much.

Mr Tilson: I'd like to make a few comments on the member for Windsor-Walkerville's unusually very quiet remarks, but he did appear to generally support the bill, although he made one comment with respect to rights advice which I'd like to briefly speak to and perhaps have him clarify.

There was some time spent on this topic with respect to rights advice. We believe we should allow the colleges to develop guidelines. We didn't want to interfere in the

professional practice of medical practitioners around this province, but we did respond as a result of the debate. I refer you to section 17, page 76 of the bill. We did respond to the question that you raise. I'll just briefly read it, because I don't have much time.

"A health practitioner shall, in the circumstances and manner specified in guidelines established by the governing body of the health practitioner's profession, provide to persons found by the health practitioner to be incapable with respect to treatment such information about the consequences of the findings as is specified in the guidelines."

I could spend a considerable amount of time, because we did debate this in the clause-by-clause and a number of delegations came and talked on this topic. In some situations one should be specific, but in other situations it may cause more harm. So you have to be very careful as to how the rights advice is to be given. But we did respond, with respect. In fact, I think it was an issue that was raised by your party, and this amendment was put forward and we feel that it's a compromise that will hopefully keep all parties happy with respect to that issue. But I thank you for raising it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Questions and comments? Rebuttal?

Mr Duncan: To the member for Dufferin-Peel, I thank him for his response and clarification of that. I'm glad I've had the opportunity to speak today on this very important matter, a matter that's as important in my community as our health care reconfiguration project. The minister announced \$48 million in capital there last week, the first such announcement. That's a very welcome announcement in our community. Unfortunately, it did not deal with the issue of reinvestment of savings into community-based services, so it's incomplete. While we're completing Bill 19 here today, we'll be speaking about that matter further.

But overall, we felt the bill was an honest attempt to deal with a very significant matter of public policy in a meaningful way with full input across the province, and we were satisfied that the concerns that were raised by delegations, indeed the concerns that were raised by our party in the course of discussions, were appropriately dealt with and there was a meaningful opportunity to debate them. I'm glad I've had the opportunity to participate in this debate today.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I'm very happy to be on the floor today to be speaking to Bill 19. As many of the viewers who watched during the committee work, I am one of the critics for this particular bill as it relates to the Advocacy Act. My colleague Marion Boyd from London Centre did a marvellous job and was very thorough, competent and very helpful overall. She dealt with much of the Consent to Treatment Act and the Substitute Decisions Act. I will be concentrating my comments as they relate to the Advocacy Act. My colleague and many others will focus around the other areas, but I suspect they will touch on the repeal of the Advocacy Act as well.

I have a suspicion that my colleague from London Centre might be a little more gracious, possibly charitable, as it relates to some of the things this government

has done with respect to the Consent to Treatment Act and the Substitute Decisions Act, but I can't guarantee it. What I can tell you is that I will not at all be charitable to this government as it relates to the repeal of the Advocacy Act. I have nothing but profound distaste and profound disagreement with this government and their action to repeal the Advocacy Act. I'm not alone in this. Hundreds of people who came before that committee feel the same way, and they have good reasons to feel the same way. I want to say that I don't have one ounce of respect for the rationale that this government provides for abolishing the Advocacy Act—not one ounce of respect, and I will show you why in a brief while.

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But I want to give you a brief history before I do that to give you a sense of how the NDP government prior to this one came to establish the Advocacy Act and what was contained within it. I want to begin by sharing with you some of the thoughts that many of you will be familiar with, expressed by a former member of Parliament whose name is Father Sean O'Sullivan. He was a member of the Conservative Party in the mid-1980s and he put together a report that is a well-known report by many and by many members of this government. This report is called *You've Got a Friend*, and it's a review of advocacy in Ontario. Our government based much of the work that we did in this field on the work that Father Sean O'Sullivan had done in consulting many, many people in the field of advocacy.

This is what he said in his executive summary:

"Ontario needs advocacy.

"More particularly, we as Ontarians need to be advocates.

"Most of us already are. We can do more," he says.

"If we are to improve our society, we must....

"Primary responsibility for advocacy education, and the development and support of advocacy services is the proper role of government."

He said prior to this, and I missed this so I will read it for the record, "Primary responsibility for advocacy must remain with us as individual citizens, as families, as friends and as neighbours of Ontario's vulnerable population."

This is a quote often quoted by many of the members opposite in committee and I suspect they will do so in response to me and when they have their time. That is the quote that is often lifted from this report, but very little else, however, is lifted from this report.

The focus for this government is that advocacy is the responsibility of individual citizens, families and friends and neighbours and they skip over everything else that Father Sean O'Sullivan said. What he said I will repeat: "Primary responsibility for advocacy education, and the development and support of advocacy services is the proper role of government."

You won't hear them speak about this because they strongly disagree with what he said. But many of us, me in particular, and the communities that he consulted agree with him.

He goes on to say what the impetus was for the kinds of conclusions that he came to, and he says:

"The Attorney General of Ontario announced the initiation of a review of advocacy for vulnerable adults in Ontario to address 'an unmet need for non-legal advocacy for vulnerable adults living in institutional care settings and in the community.'

"The impetus for the review came largely from the many organizations and agencies that represent and assist vulnerable adults, which have repeatedly and strongly expressed a need for better non-legal advocacy services in Ontario."

That's important because Father Sean O'Sullivan did not come to this conclusion, the one I will share with you in a moment, on his own. He consulted countless agencies and community organizations that were working in the field of advocacy.

"The general issue of advocacy was initially referred for consideration to the Advisory Committee on Substitute Decision Making for Mentally Incapable Persons, which had been established in 1995 by the ministries of Health...."

He goes on to talk about the terms of reference. The terms of reference are I think important, so I will read them for the record. They are as follows:

"(1) To consider the need for advocacy for adults in institutional care settings as well as those adults that may require such services and are living in the community.

"(2) To analyse thoroughly the concept of advocacy in relation to disadvantaged adult populations in Ontario, eg, frail elderly, physically handicapped, psychiatrically disabled, developmentally handicapped.

"(3) To develop options concerning the establishment of advocacy services, including organizational structure and accountability for each option.

"(4) The consideration of need will include a detailed review relating to the coordination of advocacy with:

"(a) existing case management and other delivery systems; and

"(b) existing legal and volunteer advocacy services."

Then we get to the major findings. He says in the major findings the following:

"The evidence presented to the review identified a clear need for a coordinated and effective advocacy system in Ontario."

What he was telling us and what many organizations that came before the committees that we held were telling us was that we needed "a coordinated and effective advocacy system in Ontario" because we didn't have one.

"Statistics indicate that there are potentially one million or more vulnerable adults, as defined by the terms of reference, living in Ontario at the present time who could have a need of advocacy. So long as individuals advocate for themselves and caring family, friends and volunteers do so on behalf of others, the actual needs for supplementary advocacy services will be significantly less....

"Ontario has a mixture of fragmented advocacy services which are only available to a limited number of vulnerable adults. These services are provided largely by internal advocates employed by service providers, families and volunteer groups. In the case of internal advocates there is the perception that they are limited by conflicts of interest which may undermine the confidence of the vulnerable adults in the service.

"The present system lacks a clear mandate to provide advocacy services as there are no uniform standards of service or training programs for advocates and those who advocate are hampered by the lack of a clear right of access to care facilities, clients and clients' records....

"Regrettably, the majority of our vulnerable adults and particularly those residing in smaller communities do not have access to any advocacy programs.

"Other shortcomings of a number of current advocacy services include: underfunding"—which this government continues to aggravate—"lack of resources; excessive workloads; lack of direction and support of advocates; lack of supervision of advocates; and limited accountability.

"There are alarming numbers of vulnerable adults who have been abandoned by family and friends in long-term-care facilities and in the community."

I will return to this because Mr Tilson, the member for Dufferin-Peel, has made mention of the fact that he wants to return to the families and individuals to take care of their own. Father Sean O'Sullivan says the following, to repeat it: "There are alarming numbers of vulnerable adults who have been abandoned by family and friends in long-term-care facilities and in the community."

What Mr Tilson and his government are doing is that they will continue to abandon those vulnerable people by eliminating and repealing the Advocacy Act, the Advocacy Commission, advocates and rights advisers. They will perpetuate the problems in ways that we cannot yet fathom, but they will do that. We knew that 10 years ago, and as we have more seniors and frail people coming along in the next 10 or 15 years, this will be further compounded by the lack of a system in place and lack of coordination, that they have just killed, and that they will kill once they pass this bill.

1700

The lack of coordinated advocacy services accessible to all vulnerable adults requiring assistance is a profound injustice. This profound injustice is aggravated with this government's desire to repeal the Advocacy Act, to eliminate as a result the Advocacy Commission, to eliminate advocates and to eliminate rights advisers.

What Father Sean O'Sullivan said 10 years ago will be aggravated many times over in 10 years' time. Some of his major recommendations: that we need safeguards against unnecessary guardianship; independence from ministries affected, funding sources, providers; he encourages self-advocacy where possible; enhanced role of families and volunteers; educates; is flexible; special needs; geographic requirements; multilingual; promotes cooperation with providers and ministries; accessible; seeks improvement in programs; has clout; and is accountable. He refers to what we should be putting into place by way of an advocacy ombudsman, citizens' advocacy, Advocacy Ontario, a mixed advocacy model and shared advocacy.

Measuring the five models against these criteria, the review recommends the shared advocacy model as the most appropriate and effective method of delivering advocacy services to Ontario's vulnerable adults. He says of the shared advocacy model, "This model is based upon a sharing of responsibility for the delivery of advocacy

services among government, volunteers and community groups."

We have no disagreement when the government says that we want to turn to volunteers to do the work. We have no disagreement with that; they've been doing it for years and they will continue to do it for years. We have no disagreement when the government says families should do it, no disagreement whatsoever with that, because on the whole, most families are doing it. But to turn the responsibility solely on individuals and volunteers and their families is wrong, and Father Sean O'Sullivan told us it was wrong, because he himself knew, from the consultations he had done and the studies he had done, that government needed to be involved.

What this government says is: "No, we shouldn't be. Governments have no role for advocacy." That's what they said in committee over and over again. "Governments have no place to do advocacy," and that's why they're getting rid of the Advocacy Act, that's why they're getting rid of the Advocacy Commission and that's why they're getting rid of advocates and rights advisers, contrary to the principles that were outlined by a Conservative member, no less, a Conservative member I presume of the old days, because what we have here today is not a Conservative Party. We have a Reform Party.

Interjection.

Mr Marchese: Mr Tilson, I know it doesn't harm you for me to say it because you quite willingly, probably, say, "I relate to a lot of their ideas," and in fact and in practice you're nothing short of the Reform Party.

Mr Tilson: That hurts.

Mr Marchese: It should hurt you, because we don't have much respect for the opinions of Reform Party members. As I see you all in action with respect to what you've done so far, I can tell you I have nothing but profound disagreement with most, if not all, of the things you've done so far. So, enter the Conservative government with their grand new ideas. When we came into power, we responded to what Father Sean O'Sullivan had to say; we responded by creating the Advocacy Act.

I was going to read some accounts so that people have a fairly good history of what we have done and what the components that we introduced mean, or meant at least, to the people of Ontario in so far as they were in place with us and about to be repealed by this government that can do no good for very few.

This report speaks about the commission's responsibilities. We established, under the Advocacy Act, an Advocacy Commission, and this is the role. The Advocacy Act says the commission must:

Make advocates available to help and represent vulnerable people who are able to tell an advocate what they want but have trouble finding out what their rights are, getting the information they need to make decisions or having others respect their wishes.

Help to protect vulnerable people whose health or safety may be at serious risk but who are not able to tell an advocate what they need or want.

Work to make changes that help not just one vulnerable person but many, which we refer to as systemic advocacy.

Make sure people get the information they need when they are in danger of losing their liberty or legal rights to make their own decisions, which we refer to as rights advice.

The act says the commission must also help vulnerable people form organizations and learn to advocate for themselves and each other. That's what the Advocacy Commission was put together to do, to help form organizations and learn to advocate for themselves and each other.

Make sure that advocates understand people's religious and cultural differences and provide help in a way that respects their beliefs and traditions.

Help aboriginal communities provide their own advocacy services.

Support and encourage families, friends and other people who are advocating for vulnerable people.

Educate the public about the commission's work and about the need to respect vulnerable people's rights.

Decide what skills and experience people need to be advocates and provide training programs for advocates.

Authorize community agencies and advocates to provide services.

On the role and responsibility of advocates, this is what it says: "Advocates who are authorized by the commission will provide four types of services: individual instructed advocacy...." What does that mean? Individual advocacy is meant to help people who have trouble understanding their rights, getting information they need to solve individual problems, telling others what they need or want, or having their rights and choices respected. Individual advocacy is mostly for people who are capable of instructing an advocate. Instructing an advocate means telling the advocate what you want him or her to do for you; not what you, the advocate, want for her or him, but what he or she wants you to do for them. That's hardly an intrusion, Mr Tilson.

You are capable of instructing an advocate if you can ask for an advocate's help, say what you want the help for and show in some way what kind of help you want.

There's really no limit to the kinds of help that advocates can provide, but the act says they cannot make decisions for vulnerable people or do anything that a vulnerable person who is capable of instructing them does not want them to do. It's quite clear; it was always clear. But enter this government and they say, "No, that's intrusive." How one comes to this conclusion is beyond me, but this government can achieve great marvels. They can. I can read one thing and they can tell you another. I can tell you what it says here is that advocates can't tell the person they're advising what to do. I can tell you that, and you say, "Oh no, that's intrusive." But the act does not permit that. The act says that the advocate acts on behalf of the wishes of the vulnerable person. It was always thus and it was always clear, but not for this government. This government has another agenda in mind. As far as they're concerned, these advocates are intrusive.

Working with families and friends: To continue, an advocate who is working with you should try to find out whether you have a family member or friends who might be able or willing to help you. If you do, your advocate

should work with them to help you. But your advocate cannot do this if you do not want other people involved. The advocate always takes instructions from the vulnerable person, not the other way around.

1710

Then there's more on taking instructions from substitutes, non-instructed advocacy, and it continues here with other matters: investigating and working to correct systemic problems. This clearly is what the government doesn't want. They don't want to deal with systemic barriers. If they did, they would have kept the Advocacy Act and the commission. But this government is not interested in solving systemic problems, which go beyond individual problems and in fact reveal systemic problems that Father Sean O'Sullivan revealed and understood 10 years ago. But not for this government. They don't want to solve systemic problems; they want to perpetuate them.

But let me tell you what it says. "Systemic advocacy"—

Interjections.

Mr Marchese: You're nodding your heads. I want to know what you're feeling, what you're hearing. Please let me hear you. You're moaning. Are you saying you really care about systemic advocacy? Nod your heads. Yes? Yes? Some of the nonplussed members on the other side agree that there should be systemic measures to deal with systemic problems, yet what have they done? They have eliminated the Advocacy Commission, which deals with systemic problems. The problem is that these members haven't read this document, and the problem with backbenchers is that they can never really fully read all of the documents, so they take orders, as parliamentary assistants do, from the ministers, who haven't read it either, and then they just put up their hands in committee and here in the House. That's what happens. But let me go on for those who were nodding their heads about how much they care about dealing with systemic problems.

"Systemic advocacy is meant to bring about changes that will help more than one vulnerable person. People who are doing systemic advocacy may help just a few people at a time, for example, by changing a rule that affects one person in one ward of a hospital. They may also help many people by working to improve a law that affects most vulnerable people in Ontario."

We were trying to deal with systemic problems, and we were doing it through the Advocacy Act and through the commission. This government is repealing the Advocacy Act and with it repealing investigating and working to correct systemic problems. Now, this government and its members can say what they like, but I can tell you this: When you eliminate this act you will not get at dealing with systemic problems.

"Providing Rights Advice: Rights advice is meant to give people the information they need when they are in danger of losing the legal right to make their own decisions. A rights adviser's job is to help people understand what losing the authority to make their own decisions means and that they can challenge a finding of incapacity."

This was a problem for the government. They said, "No, we don't need rights advisers, and we don't need rights advice." So what are we going to do? We're just

going to get rid of them, we're going to get rid of it, and in doing so deal with all these people trying to give information to vulnerable individuals because, as they argue, it's too intrusive, and anything that is intrusive, we've got to get rid of. What they're doing is abandoning the vulnerable person. That's what they're doing when they're repealing the act, when they're eliminating the Advocacy Commission, when they get rid of advocates and when they get rid of rights advisers: They're abandoning vulnerable people. For me, that is a shame on this government.

I want to make reference to another matter of concern to me, and it's in this document. It has to do with right of entry. Right of entry is something that was built into the act, because what it allowed are individuals who, where they are in knowledge of information that an abuse was taking place, would under controlled circumstances have the authority to enter a premise and deal with the problem.

With this act and the repeal of this act, what this government is doing is eliminating the right of entry into an establishment where abuses are occurring or could be occurring. With all of these actions, this government is leaving, now more than ever, a whole number of vulnerable people, people with disabilities, people with psychiatric problems, frail seniors, abandoned and on their own.

Some of you will take comfort in thinking—

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): Oh, Marcheesie.

Mr Marchese: —that they're all good families out there who will take care of these vulnerable people.

Mr Speaker, I just heard an individual there refer to my name as "Marcheesie." It's abusive, it's insulting. I would like that member never to say that again. I don't like it. My name is Marchese. If you ever abuse that again, you'll find me very, very angry and unhappy.

Mr O'Toole: Good.

Mr Marchese: Mr Speaker, I would ask that the member who just said "good" in relation to my comments and who called me by a name that he clearly wants to abuse me by has offended me—I want him to stand up and take it back and pronounce my name as it should be.

The Deputy Speaker: If the member said something that was offensive, would he like to apologize or withdraw the remark.

Mr O'Toole: Mr Speaker, I'm not sure—Marchese? It was a mistake, Mr Speaker.

Mr Marchese: The whole time he was having fun with his colleagues beside him, he referred to me as "Marcheesie" as a way of slandering. I told him my name is Marchese. I want him to take it back. I want him never to say it in the way that I heard him say it, because if he does it again he'll find me terribly unhappy, as I am now.

The Deputy Speaker: Did the member for Durham East—

Mr O'Toole: Mr Speaker, I'm not certain how you pronounce it, and I mean that most sincerely. Is it Marchese? Is that the correct pronunciation?

The Deputy Speaker: I'm asking the member to just apologize or withdraw. Would that—

Mr O'Toole: I'm asking the member to clarify. I'm not of the same—

The Deputy Speaker: I don't care whether it was inadvertent or—

Mr O'Toole: When he was speaking, I'm not certain how he could have heard it so clearly.

Mr Marchese: I heard you very clearly.

Mr O'Toole: I will refer to you no longer.

Mr Marchese: I was offended by it.

Mr O'Toole: I'll make sure I never refer to you again.

The Deputy Speaker: Will the member for—

Mr Tilson: He didn't mean any harm, sir, he was mistaken.

The Deputy Speaker: Would the member for Fort York please take his seat. The member for Durham East, the member for Fort York took offence to the pronunciation. Would you just withdraw it or apologize.

Mr O'Toole: I withdraw, if there was a misunderstanding, yes.

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand): Why don't you call yourself Smith? No problems.

Mr Marchese: We have another member whose intelligence shines forth so incredibly, who says to me why don't I change my name to Smith. The ignorance of those members is so profound that how one person like me could not be offended by it would transcend most humans. Mr Speaker, I look to you to address the other subhuman on the other side.

1720

Mr Preston: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I do not have to accept that. I was being jocular with the man. There are people around here whose names I mispronounce all the time. They do not take offence, they're not as small-minded as that. If the gentleman wants to call me subhuman, we all know what their credibility is anyway. But because a name is mispronounced, to be so small-minded as to take that on and make a big thing of it in the House is beyond reason.

Mr Marchese: Mr Speaker, listen to what I have to tell you, because you were speaking to the Clerk at the time that I was making my remarks. You didn't hear what he said. I want to tell you what he said. He said—

The Deputy Speaker: Put that microphone off; I want mine on. I would like to speak to the member for Fort York. There's a member who took offence at your remarks, and I would ask you to either withdraw it or apologize.

Mr Marchese: Mr Speaker, quite clearly you weren't listening. As I was trying to indicate to you—I will try it again with you—as you were speaking to the Clerk, that gentlemen over there from Brant-Haldimand said, why don't I change my name to Smith? Did you hear that, Mr Speaker?

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Thank you. I wanted to ask the member for Brant-Haldimand, did you take offence to the remark by the member from—

Mr Preston: There are a lot of remarks made around here in fun, and I just accepted it as that.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Fort York.

Mr Marchese: Racism always begins in fun. That's why today, when I said that I have done a lot of learning

in the field of anti-racism, I didn't mean that lightly. The field of anti-racism is vast, and to become an anti-racist takes a great deal of work. We often make a lot of jokes about other people, other people from ethnic groups and other cultures, and we say we don't mean much by them; we didn't mean it. There's a lot of learning that has to go on in society in general, but it begins with policymakers in particular.

I will try, having been sidetracked so badly, to continue with—

Mr Preston: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I do not accept being pointed out as a racist because of—no, I won't mention it. I will not be called out as a racist. And if the gentleman would like to discuss the situation, I think he'll find that I am one person in this place that should not be pointed out as a racist.

The Deputy Speaker: I would like to point out to all the members that I guess I would prefer a little more temperate and I'm going to give the recognition to the member for Fort York, and I would ask him to address his comments to me.

Mr Marchese: I will continue my remarks on the Advocacy Act, Mr Speaker.

This government is repealing the Advocacy Act. It's repealing the Advocacy Commission, advocates and rights advisers, is something that I have said. They argue, and I will get back to that later, that it's intrusive, too costly—I'm not sure whether they said draconian; if I'm incorrect with that, somebody will correct me—and that we're not in the business of advocacy. That's what they said.

They said very much the same when we were dealing with employment equity, when they said it was a quota system, it was draconian and it was intrusive. It is interesting that when the Conservative government says that what the others have done, the NDP, is draconian and intrusive, "When we do it in the form of a bill, such as Bill 26, it's not draconian, it's not intrusive and it has no quotas." In fact, Bill 26 has all of those components. It is intrusive, it is draconian and it had quotas. But that's okay, because if the Conservative government introduces it, it's not a problem; it's not intrusive. If an NDP government has done it, it's all those things.

If you followed Bill 26, it had quotas on doctors. It said where doctors will go and in what geographic area. That's a quota, but that's okay because if the Conservatives dream it up, quotas are all right, but if the NDP brings something that is not even remotely closely connected to quota, we'll call it a quota and it's bad. It never ceases to amaze me what this government can do.

It has all those nasty elements of draconianism, where the government gives unto itself tremendous power, where ministers have tremendous power to close a hospital without any problem, as an example. But that's okay; that's not draconian.

On the other hand, I wanted to remind people, when they said, "We're going to get rid of this employment equity and we're going to have a plan later on"—we've never seen this plan; we're never going to see this plan.

Mr Baird: He announced it next day.

Mr Marchese: Good God, you have a plan? There is no plan. The equity which we tried to achieve through

employment equity for women, people with disabilities, aboriginal people and people of colour, they won't have it. That equity is gone.

We come to the Advocacy Act. The government says, with a familiar mantra, "It's intrusive, it's draconian, it's too costly and we're not in the business of advocacy." I want to tackle a few of those issues because, as I pointed out and as I referred to in Father Sean O'Sullivan's report, it was he who said governments have a role and in fact they need to be involved.

Then the government says that it's too costly, the commission is simply a too-costly thing for us as a government to have. It's all right for us to forgo the billions of dollars that the Provincial Auditor pointed out to us from the retail sector where they're not paying their fair share; it's all right to forgo that. It's all right to forgo some of the money that used to come from photo-radar, where not only did it get people who were breaking the law and save lives, but it also, yes indeed, brought in money to the government. That's all right to get rid of and it's all right not to bring in the extra billions of dollars from the realty sector that we are not collecting as a government, that it is not paying. That's okay. But the commission, which had \$18 million to do its enormous job, was just too costly; we can't afford it. The government simply can't afford that.

1730

It's all right when the government cuts the budget of the commission to \$7 million and slowly erodes it to the point where they will proclaim this bill, it will disappear. It's still too costly, with \$7 million, even, as I will try to deal with later, when they bring a modest proposal, when David Reville, the chair of that commission, brings a modest proposal of \$3 million. It's not all right; it's still too much. But when we are dealing with people's lives, when we're dealing with vulnerable people, can this government truly say, "It's too costly"? How can they talk about caring for a vulnerable community of people with disabilities, frail, elderly people, and say, "I'm sorry, we can't afford to do that; we have better ways of doing it"?

What are their ways of doing it? They are going to help volunteers. We've always done that. Volunteers have existed as long as we can remember, and they will continue to exist. Are they going to put more effort into training more volunteers, to find more volunteers? It's wonderful, yes, I'm sure. There's a parliamentary assistant who's looking into a whole department of volunteerism; God bless. People are spending thousands of hours now, and millions of dollars are spent by volunteers themselves. Does this government genuinely believe that we're going to find thousands and thousands more volunteers to do the job that government should do through the commission and through advocates? I tell you no; I say to you no, you cannot supplant the role of the advocates and the commission. You can't do it. You could complement the role of what the commission was doing by having volunteers, as we were doing, as was the case in the past. But you cannot supplant, which is what this government is doing.

Let me tell you other problems connected to this. Volunteers come and go; volunteers get burnt out. We are all in the business of encouraging volunteers. We've done

it in the past; we will continue to encourage it in the future, but they come and go because they get burnt out. Do you know something else? These volunteers need training, and training is costly and it's got to be coordinated by someone. Who will coordinate the volunteers? The commission was there to do it. The commission was there to do exactly that.

Where are we going to find these volunteers, and who's going to do the training? And does that not require resources, or do you think you can just do it because you've willed it? It can't be done. You are taking away something that was necessary and you are pretending to put something in its place that either is already there or it isn't working, and that is why we put our system into place. That's what Father Sean O'Sullivan, your colleague at the time and a Conservative member, said and we were guided by his report, because he had consulted hundreds of people who told him what we needed. They told him that government needs to be involved—not to be out of the service of advocacy, but to be involved.

Is \$18 million too much? What is too much when we're talking about helping seniors, frail seniors, and people with disabilities and people with psychiatric problems? What is too costly, I ask you? Is \$18 million too costly? Was \$7 million too costly? Was \$3 million too costly? Where does it end? Where's the bottom line? For this government the bottom line is: "Get rid of it altogether. People will take care of themselves." As Mr Tilson said, "We're going to give families back their role, to take care of their own." That's what he said.

But they already are. What we know, however, is that there are thousands and thousands of people who are abused, who have no families, who are alone, and there are thousands of people who do have family and they're abused by their own. Mr Tilson says we're going to give back to the families their proper role, to take care of them. But if we do that, we go back before the 1980s, before Father Sean O'Sullivan and his study, which indicated that we needed to be involved as a government because there were abuses. We're going right back, and it's wrong. It's fundamentally wrong. You're abandoning those individuals who are abused—being abused, will be abused—to their own. I find that a sad and tragic day, tragic year, when this government can put asunder work that was fundamental, that was positive, that had grown out of the consultations of many people. They're putting all that away. I'm astounded by that.

It's not too costly to introduce a 30% income tax system that will go mostly to the wealthy. That's not unconscionable; this government thinks it's correct in doing so, but it's fundamentally wrong. Sixty per cent those dollars in your plan will go to 10% of the population. You can nod your head all you like, but you haven't done your reading.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): You haven't done your homework either.

Mr Marchese: Sixty per cent of your cuts will go to 10% of the wealthiest individuals, who make over \$100,000. You know something else? Those individuals are not going to go out and buy fridges. No, sir. They're not going to buy stoves. No, sir. They already have them. They're going to invest those dollars and they will not be

invested in job-creating ideas. They will not. It will enrich them but it will not create one job. No, that would be excessive; it might create a few jobs.

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): Where did you study economics?

Mr Marchese: It's wrong. It's too excessive, I admit. But I have to tell you, Mr Shea, that 60% of this cut is going to go to 10% of your wealthiest citizens, your interest group friends. But that's okay; that's all right for this Conservative government because it says this is going to create jobs. It's going to put us in the hole, a bigger abyss than we have ever seen, an economic abyss from which they will never be able to extricate themselves. It will be that profound. But let us see—

Mr Shea: Will you resign if it creates jobs?

Mr Marchese: I will resign when your Premier eats his hat on the many promises he has broken. When he eats his hat, as he said he would, I will eat mine.

Mr Hastings: You're already in a black hole.

Mr Marchese: Yes, I'm already in a black hole that you've put me in. That's absolutely true.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order. Interjections are out of order. Address your remarks through the Chair, please.

Mr Marchese: The quagmire they have created, the quicksand, that cell, that hole that they're creating will bring us all in. But it's okay for the tax cut to be introduced and to harm us in economic ways which we don't understand. That's all right. That's not costly. That will not bring about a bigger recession than you would ever think about. That will not bring about a bigger deficit that you will have to worry about where you will have to make more cuts to health—of course, you wouldn't touch health—more cuts to education—of course, you wouldn't touch education—and more cuts to social services. It's inevitable. You will see it. All of you will be so profoundly disturbed by it, but we'll have to wait and see.

Mr Tilson: No, no, Rosario. You spent it all.

Mr Marchese: Yes, we spent all. And you can afford to waste \$8 billion more on your income tax, which will not come back.

Mr Tilson: One hundred billion dollars, that's your problem.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Dufferin-Peel is out of order.

Mr Marchese: Better that the government would have spent the money in infrastructure programs, in building subways that we need or sewers that you all need. Let me tell you why that would have been more efficient as a government: Either way, you are spending it as a government. Either way, it's your money and it's our money. However, if you had spent—

Mr Tilson: Your problem is, money is no object to you.

Mr Marchese: No, no, Mr Tilson. You misunderstand. Let me make this clear. Money is an object to us, as it is to you, and I'm trying to tell you that you are wrong. I understand you think not, but you are. I'm saying to you, you as a government, however you spend it, it's our money, whether it's through an income tax cut or through spending it on infrastructure programs: sewers that I talked about, subways. These are things that we will need

for the future. It's government spending one way or the other. But if you spend it as a government on infrastructure programs, you know where your money is going, but if you give it to your wealthy friends, it will not come back.

1740

Mr Tilson: We don't have it to spend. You spent all the money. Don't you get it?

The Speaker: The member for Dufferin-Peel is out of order.

Mr Marchese: Those dollars will not come back to the economy. That's the problem. But it's okay, you have money to waste, to give away to your good friends, your interest-group, wealthy friends. That's okay. But you don't have enough money for an Advocacy Act, for an Advocacy Commission or rights advisers. It's just too much money for this government. Does that not embarrass you, because I can tell you, it will embarrass the public to know that you don't have \$18 million, not \$7 million and not \$3 million to give away to help vulnerable people, seniors, people with disabilities. You don't have enough money to help them. It's too much, but you can waste billions of dollars on your tax cut. It's unbelievable. It is to me a remarkable thing.

The fourth reason they give is that government should not be in the business of advocacy; unbelievable. How can a government govern and say, "We're not in the business of advocacy"?

Mr Ron Johnson (Brantford): We're not saying that.

Mr Marchese: Oh yes, you are, Ron. If the government is not protecting the most vulnerable citizens of this society, who is? If you as a government are saying, "It's not our role to advocate," as you've said, all of you in committee, whose role is it?

Mr Ron Johnson: Educational support; you know that.

Mr Marchese: Their role is educational support. I don't understand that. You've taken that away. The commission was doing education, community development—

Mr Ron Johnson: We didn't ever do advocacy.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Brantford is out of order.

Mr Marchese: They know full well that the commission never had the time to complete its work. They never had the time to do that. They began with rights advisers, as they obviously saw fit to do, and that was the first work they've done. They never had enough time to do anything else. This government said: "We're not going to let them do any more, because we disagree with what they did. We're going to abolish advocacy, so it doesn't matter any more what they do."

On the one hand they say, "Oh, but they didn't do anything around advocacy and the advocates." How much do you expect them to do in a short period of time? I don't understand that.

Mr Hastings: They spent a lot of money.

Mr Ron Johnson: And only \$18 million.

Mr Marchese: That \$18 million, as some of you know but many of you don't, was not spent. That was a budget to do all of these things. You clearly understand that, surely? So they spent some money to do this work, to set

up the commission, to set up the structure and to hire the rights advisers. It takes a great deal of time. Surely some of you understand that. Some of you say, "But they didn't do anything with respect to advocacy." I'm not sure what you can expect a commission to do all at once, in the space of five or six months.

Mr Hastings: A million a month, plus two million.

Mr Marchese: It's all right. You can justify it all you like. All I'm telling you is, you're wrong in abolishing—

Mr O'Toole: If we listen to you, we will end up like you, how you have. How did you make out?

Mr Marchese: It's interesting. Father Sean O'Sullivan was the person who guided us through all of this. How you can laugh—because if you're laughing at my comments, you are laughing at his report.

Mr Clement: Give me two minutes and I'll respond.

Mr Marchese: I will give you plenty of time later on. You'll have your two minutes.

You were laughing, some of you hysterically perhaps, at this report. Father Sean O'Sullivan said all of the things that all of you are laughing at. I don't find that amusing at all.

We were guided by him. The commission was part of his work. Government's role of advocacy was part of his suggestion. That's what we did. You can talk and fudge all you want about: "Oh, they overspent their money. It was wasted." No, that money was done, introduced, spent, parts of it to do his work, and you can laugh all you want at that. That's all right with me because all I'm trying to do is to communicate to the public what you are doing. If the public is convinced that even the \$3 million that was proposed as a suggestion, that even if that \$3 million was too much, if they the public agree with you, then I just rest my case.

But in the meantime, I want to make the case for those who are watching that what you are doing is undermining the work of many, many people, particularly Father Sean O'Sullivan, who guided us and informed us on what to do—your Conservative member.

We had countless deputations from the public. It was about, I would say, close to 200 deputations that we've had in the month of hearings. The vast majority of deputations that came before this committee were, some passively, but most radically, opposed to your government repealing the Advocacy Act. You might laugh at me when you disagree with me, but you—

Mr Ron Johnson: That's not true.

Mr Marchese: Oh, Ron, you know it's true. Oh, you know it's true, Ron.

Mr Ron Johnson: Not true. A lot of support over here.

Mr Marchese: Let me tell you. I will read a whole list of organizations. They don't lie. The reports are on the record. Most of them were opposed to your government repealing the Advocacy Act and thereby eliminating the commission, rights advisers and advocates. We had the Alzheimer Society of Ottawa-Carleton; Alzheimer Association of Ontario; AIDS Action Now; Alpha Court; Advocacy Centre for the Elderly; AIDS Committee of Thunder Bay; Association for Community Living; Alliance for Life Ontario; Ad Hoc Coalition on Consent,

Substitute Decisions and Advocacy; Action League of Physically Handicapped Adults; Advocacy Resource Centre for the Handicapped—

Mr Clement: You promised me two minutes.

Mr Marchese: Next week you'll have your two minutes.

A-WAY Express, Baycrest Centre for Geriatrics, Brockville Psychiatric Hospital Patient Council, Citizens' Advocates of Ottawa-Carleton, Citizen Advocacy of Windsor-Essex, Centretown Community Health Centre, Citizens' Commission on Human Rights, Carleton Disability Awareness Centre, Concerned Friends of Ontario Citizens in Care Facilities, Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights in Ontario, Canadian Mental Health Association, Canadian Mental Health Association, Metro—the other one was London-Middlesex—Canadian Mental Health Association, Ontario division—it's a long list, Speaker.

I wanted to continue reading it to get people the sense that when I speak about this issue, I'm not speaking for myself, who has a profound interest in this issue, but I am speaking for all those organizations, a tenth of which I mentioned, who came in front of this committee and said, "Don't get rid of the Advocacy Act," and I will read them for the record, some of them at least because I have them.

Let me return to section 1. David Reville says: "It doesn't take long to say the words, 'The Advocacy Act, 1992, is repealed.'" He says, "By rights it should take longer. It should take more than six words to dash hopes and shatter dreams. Decades of hopes and dreams preceded the passing of the Advocacy Act in 1992. That there was an Advocacy Act at all was a minor miracle, and that the Advocacy Act took the shape it did, well, now, that was a major miracle. The good guys had finally won."

And then the forces of no good got into power and they got rid of the Advocacy Act. Six words. It doesn't take much to destroy something that so many people have built over the years.

1750

Windsor Essex Community Advocacy Network for Persons with Physical Disabilities—this is what they say:

"We feel that Bill 19 turns a blind eye and a deaf ear to the plight of vulnerable people in Ontario. The fact remains that it absolutely seems to sweep aside the Advocacy Act and the components of that act, because from the point of view of vulnerable people and in particular the physically disabled, we looked upon December 10, 1992, as a day of reckoning in that through the proclamation of the Advocacy Act, vulnerable people in Ontario were given equal status, were provided with a level playing field with the rest of society.

"For far too long, vulnerable persons have been marginalized, ignored and have been looking from the outside in and knocking at the door to become equal partners, have equal status within society at large. In our opinion, the Advocacy Act opened that door and allowed us in. Bill 19 throws us back to the dark ages with the repeal of the Advocacy Act."

That was the Windsor Essex Community Advocacy Network for Persons with Physical Disabilities. It's not me saying it, it's them.

This submission was presented by Judith Wahl from the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly, and she said the following:

"The communiqué issued by the Ontario Ministry of the Attorney General on November 15, 1995, describes the Advocacy Commission as an intrusive and bureaucratic government agency with broad powers. One might keep in mind that these powers of the Advocacy Commission are only to be exercised in providing advocacy services to help individual vulnerable persons to express and act on their wishes, ascertain and exercise their rights, speak on their behalf, engage in mutual aid and form organizations to advance their interests; to help individual vulnerable persons who are incapable of instructing an advocate if there are reasonable grounds to believe that there is a risk of serious harm to the health or safety of those persons; to help vulnerable persons to bring about systemic changes to governmental, legal and social economic institution levels; and to provide rights advice and other advocacy services presently required which are described in detail above.

"It is recommended that the Advocacy Act not be repealed, in the interest of protecting the most vulnerable citizens of the province of Ontario. If the act is repealed, it is strongly recommended that an alternative system of advocacy be developed to provide rights advice to persons who may be deprived of their right to make decisions through the operation of the SDA and the HCCA."

This other submission is by Eve Gillingham, the Family and Service Provider Advisory Committee, and she says:

"We sympathize with the government's struggle to rein in the deficit. Nevertheless, we strongly recommend that the government not repeal the Advocacy Act unless and until some other independent system of advocacy is in place throughout the province. We believe that it is the obligation of government, not just family, service providers and volunteers, to offer support for advocacy so that the rights of vulnerable people in Ontario are respected and vulnerable people are able to make their own life decisions. Over the past 15 years, it has been demonstrated again and again that there is a compelling need for a system of independent advocacy in Ontario. Please ensure that the work of the past decades will not have been wasted."

I didn't say that; the Family and Service Provider Advisory Committee says that.

I am guided by these opinions because they are in the field. They are the ones who work with the elderly and the disabled and people with mental illness, and if I am not informed by them, then by whom should I be informed? When this government fails to take the advice of these people, who is informing them?

I can tell you who they're informed by, and I'll make mention of this next week when I have an opportunity to finish my comments. They have been informed by the doctors and a few lawyers. Perhaps they felt guilty about Bill 26, where they had quotas for them, where they wouldn't get their billing numbers unless they were sent somewhere that the minister said they had to go, and so they said: "We can't do this again. So we'll have to listen

to the doctors, otherwise, we're in real trouble again." Perhaps that was it. But this government has been informed, on the whole, by doctors who opposed the Advocacy Act, and a few lawyers. All the organizations that came in front of that committee, our committee, who said the contrary, you didn't listen to. You swept all that away.

So I ask the people of Ontario, is this government listening to you? Because I can tell you that all those groups of people who are rooted in their communities, working daily with vulnerable individuals, marginalized, abandoned and on their own, if you don't listen to them and if they haven't been listening to them, are they listening to you, the general public? I can tell you not. If

they not once expressed an interest in supporting the close to—over, I would say—150 organizations that said, "Please don't repeal the act," if they don't listen to them, we're in trouble. They're not going to be listening to you out there, and it's wrong, it's profoundly wrong.

Mr Speaker, I can see that the clock is running out, and I have much to say and I will continue this on Monday. So with that, Mr Speaker, I would move adjournment.

The Speaker: It being almost 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until next Monday at 1:30 of the clock.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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No. 46

N° 46

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

Monday 25 March 1996

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Lundi 25 mars 1996



Speaker
Honourable Allan K. McLean

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Allan K. McLean

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 25 March 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 25 mars 1996

*The House met at 1330.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

JENNIFER ROBINSON

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): This past weekend a very talented young woman from Windsor, Ontario, represented Canada at the international skating competition in Edmonton. Her name is Jennifer Robinson.

Jennifer made an outstanding contribution on behalf of her city and her province and her country, and all of us who share Windsor as a home town were especially proud. Young people like Jennifer are an excellent example to all young Canadians, and indeed all Canadians, that with willpower, perseverance and courage we too can become the very best at what we set our minds to do.

Jennifer Robinson inspired each and every one of us and continues to inspire each and every one of us, and I'm sure all members of the House join me today in congratulating Jennifer and thanking her for representing not only her city, but her province and her country on the international stage. She is a talented young woman with a bright future in her sport and is a great example of young people in this province and in this country and what they can achieve.

All of us in this House, and especially those of us from Windsor who have watched her career with great pride, salute her today: Jennifer Robinson, the Canadian champion in women's figure skating.

CORRECTIONAL OFFICERS

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): The Minister of Correctional Services knows, or he darned well ought to know by now, that over the course of this past weekend, especially on Friday night down at the Niagara Detention Centre, approximately a dozen of the correctional officers who had been working as essential workers felt compelled not to work their shift because of serious and legitimate health and safety concerns.

The Minister of Correctional Services knows as well that there has, over the past, been an increasingly hostile and poisoned environment being generated at the Niagara Detention Centre because of the abusive nature of management towards correctional officers. Indeed, this came to a peak in the first part of this month when a correctional officer was assaulted by a manager. Things are in a crisis situation there. The management is generating hostility among the inmates against the correctional officers, further jeopardizing those officers who, as

essential workers, are attempting to maintain some peace and order in the detention centre environment.

It is imperative that the Minister of Correctional Services investigate this matter immediately. Management at the Niagara Detention Centre has clearly gotten out of hand. Management at the Niagara Detention Centre is clearly abusing its position. There are issues that have to be resolved, and I tell you, all hell is going to break loose if the Minister of Correctional Services doesn't attend to this promptly.

LEARNING DISABILITIES MONTH

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): I rise today to inform my colleagues and the people of Ontario that we are in the midst of the silver anniversary of Learning Disabilities Month. Since 1971, learning disabilities have been recognized in the month of March.

A learning disability is a dysfunction of the central nervous system in an individual of potentially average to above average intelligence. A learning disability is a problem in processing information and is not related to an individual's intelligence. Learning disabilities are manifested in delays in the development of or difficulties in attention, memory, spelling, coordination, social competence or communication.

This invisible handicap affects almost 800,000 Ontarians. One of them is my own son, David, who was diagnosed with a learning disability many years ago but recently graduated from high school with excellent marks.

I would like to take this opportunity to commend the efforts of the Learning Disabilities Association, which for the past quarter century has been raising awareness of this disability. I am sure that through their hard work, and with the cooperation of government, people affected by this disability will live easier and happier lives.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE DISPUTE

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): Referring to the rising temperatures around and on the OPSEU picket lines, Mike Harris has requested that people begin to act like adults in order that cooler heads may prevail. Harris should take his own advice or, at the very least, pass it on to some of the members of his caucus.

For his part, Harris has shown time and again that he will not pass up an opportunity to use abusive, belligerent and inflammatory language during the strike in order to score cheap political points. He has used hyperbole to suggest that the unions must not be allowed to hold the government hostage. He has referred to the actions of OPSEU during this strike as "bullying" and "dictating" and has said that he is prepared to choose picket line

violence over having union leaders run the province. He's even described the right of OPSEU workers to strike as "forbidden candy."

The cavalier attitude that Harris has taken with respect to the strike and the OPSEU workers out on the picket line has shown that he is the one who needs to start acting like an adult and realize the seriousness of the situation. Instead, he's encouraging his caucus members to incite the line.

Just last week, Transportation minister Al Palladini showed that he is taking cues from the Premier when he used an opportunity in the House to criticize the action of OPSEU workers and attempt to blame them entirely for the poor winter road conditions during the strike.

It's time that Harris and his caucus started leading by example and began to cool down their own inflammatory rhetoric so that we can begin restoring some semblance of peace—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member's time has expired.

ST JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I'm pleased to rise today to speak to the issue of the St Joseph's Hospital proposed closure in my riding and to point out the fact that one of the reasons the report is coming under fire in Hamilton is because of the shortened time frame that this government imposed on the task force. While they may not have made it an absolute rule that they had to, they made it very clear that they wanted the work that should have taken two years to be done in one year.

We believe that rush is in large part why we have a report that in many ways is not as accurate and as in-depth and does not take into account the sort of factors that it should, in addition to the fact that it's this government that has broken its promise on health care. This is the government that said, "Not one cent from health care," and has announced cuts from the \$17.4 billion, breaking their election promise.

1340

The Friends of St Joseph's continue to mount as much pressure as we can. This article was in the Hamilton Spectator on the weekend. We had a meeting at Hamilton city hall with over 600 people recently. My colleague the member for Hamilton East, Dominic Agostino, was on his feet the other day raising this issue. The Tory back-bencher the member for Wentworth North, Mr Toni Skarica, has sent a public letter indicating his support to keep St Joseph's open. I urge my other Tory colleagues to join with us in saving St Joseph's. Don't hide in the bushes. Come forward. Now is the time we all need to be there for our city.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member's time has expired. Further statements? The member for Wentworth East.

Mr Ed Doyle (Wentworth East): Yes, sir, I've already come forward on that issue.

RED HILL CREEK EXPRESSWAY

Mr Ed Doyle (Wentworth East): Lately there's been a tremendous amount of publicity surrounding the Red Hill Creek Expressway. Some parties have suggested that we have wavered in our commitment to this project. I welcome this opportunity to state unequivocally that our government has stood by this promise and shall continue to do so.

In a time when dollars are tight and where we are looking to spend the taxpayers' money in a smarter fashion, a firm \$100-million commitment has been made. This pledge exists because the Premier, the Minister of Transportation and the rest of our caucus understand the economic importance of this issue to the people of Hamilton-Wentworth. This expressway will mean opportunity and growth to the region.

While there may be variations in the cost of different components of the road, one thing remains: The era of writing blank cheques has gone. Innovative ways of building must be sought out and indeed they are being examined.

I am confident that we are in a position to learn from other highway experiences, including Highway 407, and in the end find that we are in the good ground-breaking territory of creative and resourceful construction. Yet let me leave no doubts: The taxpayer will not pay twice. This means no tolls.

While going door to door during the campaign, I talked of our commitment towards the Red Hill Creek Expressway. In keeping with our promises, we will live up to this pledge and anyone with a message otherwise is forgetting that we have not wavered from our stand on this issue.

LEGISLATIVE AWARDS

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): As tonight is Oscar night, it's once again time for us to recognize the best and the worst Queen's Park has to offer.

The Oscar for best performance by a golfer goes to Mike Harris for his continued portrayal of Ronald Reagan in The American President.

Former actor Dave Tsubouchi has finally earned an Oscar for his unforgettable performance in Mighty Tuna-Bity.

The Oscar for this year's most draconian piece of legislation goes to Mr Harris's Omnibus.

Despite a strong performance by Chris Stockwell, this year's Oscar for best performance in a non-supporting role goes to Morley Kells. Don't worry, Chris. I know you'll be winning it hands down next year.

Mr Speaker, your behind-the-scenes direction of The Casinos of Simcoe County has earned you not just an Oscar but a casino to boot.

Conservative stuntman Bill King, who gives new meaning to the words "beating the bushes," has also earned an Oscar. Nobody dives into character like Bill does.

Jim Wilson, who is never out of character, has the Oscar for his impersonation of Nixon.

Last but not least, the Newt Gingrich-Jesse Helms lifetime memorial achievement award goes to the entire Conservative caucus for their performance in Nonsense and Insensitivity.

ONTARIO BUSINESS

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): This morning I had an opportunity to meet with students and staff of the Toronto School of Business in Timmins, and in that particular discussion we had with the students and staff there all of them agreed, as I think we all do in the assembly here, that the government has to work towards trying to find a way to balance a budget over a period of time. But at the same time they all agreed on one thing: They either said this government is moving far too fast and far too rigorously in trying to achieve that goal, or in some cases that they're moving in the wrong direction.

They see the government's direction as being overbearing as they see it as really being a confrontational agenda, one by which nobody really wins in the end, and they worry as students of business what it means to say to the business sector and what it means to say to the recovery of our economy when you have a government that's intent on hitting people over the head and trying to find confrontational ways to be able to achieve their aims.

They suggest there's a different approach. They can learn by the examples of what has happened in the private sector already. They can look at Kimberly-Clark, Algoma Steel and de Havilland Aircraft as good examples about how you can restructure so that there is a win-win in the end.

I spoke to a student this morning in fact who was at the Toronto School of Business. He was there because his employer, in doing the restructuring of the layoff, offered him an enhanced incentive to be able to leave the workplace, to return to school and to have enhanced severance. It was, I think, a positive means.

There are win-win examples out there we can learn from if the government decides to sit down and to follow the examples of others. They're not the first employer in Ontario to restructure. They should learn by what other people have done and try to come into the 21st century and be a bit more progressive in how they deal with their employees.

BRANTFORD GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr Ron Johnson (Brantford): This past Friday, March 22, was a banner day for health care in Brantford, for a number of reasons. One of those reasons was the opening of Brantford's very first community cancer clinic. I'm very proud to stand here today and congratulate the Brantford General Hospital, its foundation, and of course the Brantford district health council for that achievement.

Although there was an approval process to go through with our government, this was an initiative that was identified as a priority by the hospital's board of governors and administration. It took nearly a decade to achieve, but they raised their own money, and did it in

the face of some very difficult economic times in the province of Ontario.

This is exactly what our government means by "doing more with less," and it's exactly the type of initiative and determination that we encourage and applaud. They set an example for the rest of the province to follow.

Another of the reasons that it was a great day for Brantford's health care was that the hospital also launched the world's first multipurpose MAX, a state-of-the-art, high-tech X-ray machine developed in partnership with Toshiba's laboratories in Japan. The Brantford General Hospital is to be congratulated for both achievements.

I would also like to thank Health minister Jim Wilson for making the time to come down to Brantford to officially preside over both those events, as well as some of my other colleagues, David Tilson, the member for Dufferin-Peel, Ed Doyle, the member for Wentworth East, and Toni Skarica, the member for Wentworth North.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): I would like to take the opportunity to introduce the pages joining us:

Sandy Adam, Cochrane South; Karl Baldauf, Lincoln; Katrina Bond, Niagara South; Tamara Chalmers, Prescott and Russell; Lindsay Chancey, Etobicoke West; Melissa Dobson, Brantford; Peter Doelman, Elgin; Jan-François Grabowiecki, Ottawa South; J. David Hagedorn, Bruce; David Hamilton, Sudbury; Stephenie Harrison, Scarborough-Ellesmere; Sarah Hofstetter, Oxford; Kate Hutchison, London Centre; Adam Jakop, York South; Michael Kirton, Eglinton; Sheena Kivisto, Port Arthur; Craig Lariviere, Cambridge; Kelly McIntosh, Essex South; Nathaniel Miles, Wentworth East; Sarah Minchom, Simcoe West; Kristin O'Rourke, York Mills; Nathan Sutanto, Scarborough North; Ian Verheyden, Nepean; Justin Yan, Durham Centre. Welcome to our pages.

MEMBERS' COMMENTS COMMENTAIRES DES DÉPUTÉS

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm asking you to address this point of order, as you were not in the chair last Thursday when the event occurred. During the very day when we were celebrating the elimination of racism, an event occurred in this House which I think should be addressed by the Speaker, and it should be addressed quickly, to send out a message about appropriate conduct in this House.

We know there is a list of parliamentary language and we also know it is the responsibility of the Speaker to address issues that members feel very strongly about. During the debate, the member for Durham East and the member for Brant-Haldimand did something that I believe is not only conduct unbecoming a member of this House, but particularly on that day, when we were dealing with the elimination of racism and the creation of a more tolerant society and all of our speeches were responding to that. When I reviewed the Hansard, I have to tell you, and I share this on behalf of those who saw on parliamentary television what occurred, the totally unacceptable behaviour of two members as they did two things: one

was to deliberately mispronounce a member's name; and second, to make the unacceptable suggestion that a member change his name.

1350

I come from a community, and I have personal family experience, where an aunt of mine was forced to change her name in order to be able to get a job in this province. Many members of my community were forced to change their names to more anglicized versions in order to be able to be accepted in our society.

In 1996, to have a suggestion from a member of the Conservative caucus that members in this House whose names we should know and if we don't know we should make a point of learning how to pronounce, to suggest that that member change his name, I believe, diminishes us all. That suggestion was brought about because one of the members of this House made fun of and deliberately distorted the name in a very, I think, nasty kind of way.

I would ask you, Mr Speaker, to check the Hansard, page 1,817, to call the members to order and to deal with this serious issue of parliamentary protocol. I feel very, very strongly that if we are to promote a tolerant society it must begin here in this House and that as members of the Legislature we must stand firm and strong and clear that name-calling and suggestions that someone change their name in order to be accepted are unacceptable. I ask you to rule on that and to set a standard in this House so that all members of this House will know what is acceptable conduct and what is unacceptable parliamentary conduct.

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): Mr Speaker, if I might speak to the point of privilege or order—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order. On a point of order or personal privilege, the member for Brant-Haldimand.

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand): I've written this out so that it comes out exactly as what happened. I would like to clear up the events of last Thursday afternoon in this Legislature, events completely blown out of proportion and importance by the media. My statement to the member for Fort York was made in jest, prompted by my recollections of a standing joke I have with my constituency assistant, whose name is Sevenhuysen. When questioned by callers on how to spell or pronounce her name, she says, "Call me Smith."

My friend opposite had just ended a heated exchange and obviously was in no mood to be joked with. He retorted by calling me a subhuman racist. When we left the House that day, I spoke with the member opposite and commented that he may have been a little thin-skinned, to which he agreed and said, "I apologize for what I said."

I apologized on Thursday. However, because of the brouhaha surrounding this matter, I'd like to explain myself. As far as the subhuman element of criticism, I'll let people make up their own minds, but racist? In the past 15 years I've had upwards of 10 first nation teen-aged boys as foster children. My eldest adopted son is French Canadian and Pennsylvania Dutch. My second adopted son is Hungarian. My third adopted son is black.

My wife is black. As far as an ethnicist, I am not; as far as a racist, I'm a minority in my own home.

I think this has all been blown out of proportion. The two of us have apologized to each other, me to him in the House and he to I going out the door as friends.

The Speaker: I must say that last week I had heard some of it when I wasn't in the chair. I would advise members that if they would refer to one another by their ridings or their constituencies and not by their names, it would solve a lot of the problems we've had.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I rise on a note of personal observation here, personal privilege. The member for Oriole suggested in her remarks that I deliberately mispronounced the member's name, which is totally false. If she had been here, she would have understood. I want to correct the record that I did not deliberately mispronounce the member's name, and I am sure if I was to make a full comment, in fact there were no Liberals in the House at the time.

Mr Cooke: Mr Speaker, if I might, I would like to join with the member for Oriole to make a few comments about the incidents last week. I thought that perhaps it wouldn't be necessary after listening to the two members, but I think the two members have reinforced that this needs to be addressed by the Speaker very clearly.

Whatever the motivation was of the two members—and I'm not going to try to guess what they were thinking at the time; I don't know that anybody in this province could guess what the two members were thinking at the time—I do think that we have had over the time that I've been a member incidents like this in the past. They've been very unhelpful and they've demonstrated clearly the lack of sensitivity of some members.

Whether the Conservative members who are involved in this like it or not, Ontario has changed in the last half-century, and this place has changed. The only way that the Legislature will operate in a mature way is if members show some sensitivity and some respect for other members in the Legislature. At the very least, the comments that were made by the two members in the House last week demonstrated gross insensitivity and a lack of respect for a member of the assembly.

Mr Speaker, I think that in addition to the comments that have been made on the record today, it would be appropriate for the members, instead of questioning everybody else's motivations—

Interjections.

Mr Cooke: Mr Speaker, you can see by the interjections that there is a serious problem in this place.

I hope that the government House leader and the minister responsible, the Minister of Citizenship, who was quoted in the papers on the weekend as saying, "Maybe we should just, if this isn't raised in the House, let sleeping dogs lie"—that's not how these matters are resolved. The only way these matters are resolved is through the leadership, of course, of the Speaker, rules that we have in this place and leadership from the government. The Premier and the minister must have discussions with their caucus members so this doesn't happen again. I hope that the minister or the government House leader will go on the record now in condemning

the comments that were made in this assembly last Thursday.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, on the same point: Through you, to the members of the Legislative Assembly, I think the member for Brant-Haldimand issued an apology on Thursday and he's again reiterated that apology today. That would demonstrate to me that indeed he is sincere and sensitive about this issue. I understand the concerns that have been expressed by other members previous to me speaking on this particular point of order. I think that the member for Brant-Haldimand's life experiences speak for themselves. I think that he does understand, if he didn't before, that these issues are extremely sensitive to the individuals concerned and I think that we should go on with the business of the House keeping that in mind.

The Speaker: Ministers' statements?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Same point of order?

The Speaker: On a new point of order? If it's on the same point, I'm not going to accept it. We have heard enough with regard to the points that have been raised by each party. We have heard the points from the House leader. We have heard the apologies. As far as I'm concerned, no more points on that issue.

1400

M. Bisson : Point de privilège.

The Speaker: New point of order?

M. Bisson : J'aimerais seulement, pour le record, démontrer que moi aussi, comme M. Marchese, j'ai été insulté par des membres du gouvernement en changeant mon nom, pas seulement au comité mais aussi à l'Assemblée juste la semaine passée.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. Would the member take his seat, please. I have ruled on the point of order that has been raised by different members.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Yes, I understood what he said, and there are no more points of order on that subject. The member for Parkdale.

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I would just ask if you would kindly reconsider because of the importance of this issue. Is that possible?

M. Bisson: Monsieur le Président, j'ai fait un point d'ordre puis j'ai demandé que l'Assemblée m'écoute. Vous avez donné une décision de ne pas écouter ce que j'ai dit comme membre comme si vous n'avez même pas compris ce que j'essayais de dire.

J'ai dit avec toute sincérité qu'ici à l'Assemblée la semaine passée, et aussi dans les comités dans les dernières semaines, moi comme député francophone, franco-ontarien, je me suis fait appeler des noms par des membres conservateurs, pas mon nom donné, Bisson, mais un nom donné comme «Buffalo».

Comme membre, je veux dire ici aujourd'hui à l'Assemblée que vous avez, en tant que Président, la responsabilité d'assurer que les membres de cette Assemblée comprennent qu'il y a un respect qu'on doit se démontrer, mais aussi que les membres ont besoin de reconnaître qu'ici, on est supposé de montrer par exemple. On est

des chefs de nos communautés et se démontrer comme ayant un manque de respect comme l'on a vu dans cette Assemblée jeudi de la semaine passée, avec mon collègue, et le manque de respect que j'ai eu moi-même comme député, n'est pas acceptable.

Je vous demande de donner de la manière la plus claire possible des directives aux membres de l'Assemblée de reconnaître que l'on n'est pas tous anglophones ici ; on est des Italiens, on est des francophones, on est des Polonais, du monde de différentes ethnies. On veut avoir le respect auquel on a droit comme législateurs ici à l'Assemblée.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

KIDNEY DIALYSIS

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I'm pleased to rise today to make the fourth in a series of important announcements about this government's reinvestment in kidney dialysis services. An additional four communities in the central-west region of the province—Brantford, Stoney Creek, Oakville and Orangeville—will be receiving an expansion of kidney dialysis services. This announcement translates into an additional 96 patients being able to access treatment closer to home.

This government is again demonstrating, with concrete action, our intention to find savings in the sealed health care envelope and to reinvest those savings into front-line services for patients.

Dialysis is a mechanical cleansing of the blood required by people with kidney failure who have not had a kidney transplant. Access to this life-giving treatment is being significantly improved in these communities for people who need it. We are committed to meeting the growing demand for dialysis and to making sure patients receive treatment as close to home as possible.

Almost 4,000 patients receive dialysis in Ontario. The number has been increasing by between 8% and 10% each year. Most recent information indicates this increase could jump to 15% in 1996. This government has acted to meet this growth by reinvesting \$25 million into dialysis services.

Dialysis is but one of the announcements our government has made about reinvestments into front-line health care services. Other investments include cardiac surgery; measles immunizations for school-aged children; services for Ontario residents with acquired brain injuries; expanded emergency health services such as paramedic services, defibrillation and symptom relief medications; enhanced paramedic training; new MRI machines for the province; and emergency room coverage for underserved areas through our \$70-an-hour on-call emergency sessional fee for physicians in this province.

These are but a few of the meaningful improvements this government has already made to the health care system. Many more are to come. This government will continue to identify the savings in the health care envelope first, and then move quickly to reinvest these dollars back into the system.

This is the ironclad promise we made in the Common Sense Revolution: to maintain the \$17.4-billion health care budget while meeting the priority needs of the people of this province.

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): We greet the minister's statement today, which, as he says, is the fourth in a series of dialysis announcements, as something the people of the province had expected to have before the end of 1995.

The reason they had that expectation was because that's what the minister promised he would do. The proposal call went out in August. The end of the process was the end of September, and the minister promised communities across this province that the funds would flow, the decisions would be made and people would have greater access to dialysis services before the end of 1995.

We know there are communities that still haven't heard. My colleague Mr Cleary, the member for Cornwall, just last week sent a message to the minister that the people of Cornwall and the people in the Ottawa area have been waiting to hear what the minister is going to do to expand dialysis services in their community. A letter Mr Cleary received from dialysis patients and their families says, "My mother and others from Cornwall travel the rough roads three times a week in snowstorms, rain or shine," and these people have no choice, because they do not have dialysis services in their community.

I say to the minister, where are these dialysis services that he promised across this province? I believe it is cruel that people across the province have to wait while he does out these announcements. He says he is reinvesting. Well, I'll tell you something: He has cut \$1.3 billion from hospital services across this province. In Windsor alone, we know that full-time dialysis nurses are being laid off, and people are very concerned about what's going to be happening to those services. We've heard that there are some part-time casual people being hired to fill in, but what people are telling us is that the state of dialysis services is very serious. I have a communication from the chief of dialysis services, the director of haemodialysis, at the Ottawa Civic Hospital, and he said: "An answer to whether they would allow us to go ahead with the new units was to come from the ministry at the end of December. We were then told mid-February, then mid-March. We still have not heard anything." This is from Dr Posen.

I say to the minister that political announcements are inappropriate when it comes to health services. Stand and make your announcement so that people across this province will know what they are going to receive and when they are going to receive it. Stop the cuts. Stop the cuts in services and look very, very carefully at making sure that everyone in this province has access to the services they need.

This is no laughing matter, Minister. There are communities across this province that believed you when you said they would have those announcements. Make those announcements today.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): To add to what my colleague has said, I find it amazing that this government chose to make all the cuts, \$1.3 billion in one shot, back at the end of last year but, however, is

now going to politically and conveniently hold out on making announcements to try to minimize the negative impact of hospital closures, of cutbacks.

In my own community, \$24 million has been announced in cuts from this government to local hospitals. I can tell you that this government has not made \$24 million in announcements in reinvesting that money in the community of Hamilton-Wentworth. The St Joseph's Hospital situation that we're facing today, which my colleague from Hamilton Centre spoke of earlier, is a classic example of the impact of health care cuts in Ontario: the hundreds of jobs that are going to be lost, the delay for surgery, the lineups that will occur as a result of these cuts.

What I ask this minister to do is come forward and make all your announcements at one shot. If you're going to stand by your philosophy that not one cent will be cut and that the same amount that has been taken out will be returned, then let us go community by community and make your \$24-million announcement and reassure the people of Hamilton-Wentworth that the \$24 million you've taken out of health care you're going to put back in.

But as long as this government continues to play with people's lives and continues to put the lives of people in jeopardy and continues to tell hospital workers, "We're not sure where your job stands" and will conveniently make announcements from time to time—I think you're putting health care in Ontario in jeopardy; you're putting the health care system in jeopardy. Come clean. Tell the people of Ontario what you plan to do for the next 12 months and tell us where this is going from here. Stop playing politics with this very important issue.

1410

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I'm pleased, for the fourth time, to congratulate the Minister of Health on the expansion of kidney dialysis services in the province—the fourth time for the same envelope of money, I must say. But we do welcome the expansion of this important service that was begun, I believe, by the Liberals when they were in office. That's why I found it a little breathtaking that the member for Oriole would say that there's no room for political statements on the expansion of health care services. But I seem to recall her having made a few in her day as well.

However, I must say that we do welcome this expansion of dialysis services. We certainly, as a government, expanded the dialysis services as well, and of course there's more to do. We all understand that.

I believe that while people will applaud this particular announcement, what is still causing a great deal of nervousness across the province, certainly in our caucus and in our party, is the fact that the cuts to health care that have been announced are so substantial—\$2 billion over three years and about \$1.3 billion in the hospital sector alone of the health care system. So there's still a great deal to be done.

I must say that when the minister announced that the \$17.4 billion is a sealed envelope—which means, of course, that it will not dip below \$17.4 billion this year, next year, the year after; the Premier has even indicated that it may rise above that—a lot of us were somewhat

cynical about the fact that it was sealed at \$17.4 billion, but we were nervous that it might drop in the intervening years. But the minister is making it increasingly clear that he intends to keep that \$17.4 billion at least every year during their first mandate—you notice I didn't say first and last—as a government. So we assume that will be the case.

I must say we will be watching very carefully to make sure that the Health budget is not bumped up by moving certain sections of the Ministry of Community and Social Services or Education or any other ministry over to the Ministry of Health. We shall be watching very carefully that the minister does not attempt to do that in order to pretend that health care services are indeed a sealed envelope of \$17.4 billion.

Having said that, we welcome this expansion of the dialysis treatment across the province and we look forward to his next announcement. I hope that I'll be able to rise in my place and congratulate the minister once again on that same package.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I want to join with my colleague and acknowledge how much we appreciate the new investment in this area, but we need to point out the fact that the health policy of this government, in terms of its spending allocations, has sent quite a shock wave through a lot of communities like my own. We talk about St Joseph's Hospital closing; in large part, we think that's as a result of the \$1.3 billion you've announced in hospital cuts.

A lot of people voted for this government believing them when they said, "Not one cent from health care," yet they announced \$2 billion in cuts over three years, and they're trying to put forward the argument, "As long as we're back at \$17.4 billion at the end of our term, we met our commitment." That is not the case. It's not accurate, and while you may think it's political fancy footwork, it's doing an awful lot of damage in communities like mine, where people are really concerned about St Joseph's Hospital, about the planning around how we deal with the new rationalized system, because you forced the local task force to shrink its time frame from two years to one year.

That's left us with a plan, quite frankly, that doesn't meet our community needs, yet this minister stands up, knowing that he has a good-news announcement—and as a standalone item it is, but if he believes for one minute that's going to fool the people of Ontario into believing that you've kept your promise on health care, he's going to be sadly mistaken.

My colleague from Nickel Belt has talked about the fact that any shifting from other ministries of money into the Health budget is not going to work either. The fact of the matter is, Minister, you ran on a platform that said no cuts to health care, not one cent. You're breaking that promise every day and this little charade is not going to cover that off. People won't be fooled.

ORAL QUESTIONS

MEMBERS' COMMENTS

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a question for the Premier. Mr Premier, just before the

minister's statement, there was an exchange that took place in this House on points of order and points of personal privilege and it all had to do with events that took place in the House on Thursday between the member for Durham East, the member for Brant-Haldimand and the member for Fort York.

Mr Premier, the issues have been discussed, the apologies have been made, but I think there's a basic principle that has not been addressed, one that I think falls squarely on your shoulders. One of them is the comment that was made by the member for Brant-Haldimand that what he said was meant in fun, as if to ridicule someone because of their ethnicity, their religion, their culture is funny. The second statement was made by yourself, and I want to quote: "I think it was bad timing on everybody's part."

Mr Premier, could you tell me when it is going to be good timing for members to say the things that they did?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Never.

Mr Kwinter: Mr Premier, that was a very succinct answer that it is never appropriate, and I think that it's got to be conveyed to your members that they have to have this sensitivity. If this were something that happened in the heat of exchange, in the heat of debate, it would be regrettable and the apologies would be made. There may be some hard feelings, but hopefully people would see the error of their ways and correct it. But I should tell you that this isn't the first time it's happened and it isn't the first time that it's happened with the member for Durham East.

At a meeting on February 5, 1996, of the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly, members of our caucus were there and they heard the member for Durham East mock the accent of the member for Lake Nipigon by responding in an affected French accent. In another committee meeting he said that if the native peoples who were camped out in front of Queen's Park were in Ottawa, they would be made to pack up their teepees and go home.

Again, this shows a lack of sensitivity, a lack of compassion for people who have problems, who are finding it difficult to adjust and who want to express their concerns.

Mr Premier, again I ask you, as the leader of your party and as the political head of this province, do you not think that you have to make a special effort to make sure that the members of your caucus are cognizant of these differences and must in fact not only be tolerant but make sure that everybody in this province feels that they are part of it?

Hon Mr Harris: Yes. We accept our responsibility to not respond in kind, to set a higher standard, even than members of the opposition, and we will attempt to do that.

Mr Kwinter: I know that this is a difficult situation and I know that the Premier isn't very comfortable dealing with it, but we are dealing with the facts of life, we are dealing with a province whose composition has changed dramatically over the years and there is a great feeling of alienation by people who feel that somehow or other they are on the outside looking in and those who

are on the inside are doing everything they can to keep them there.

I think it's imperative and I would again plead with you to let your ministers and your caucus know that they have to make sure in all of their dealings with the people that they convey to them that this is a province for all of the people, that opportunities are there for everyone, and regardless of your colour, your creed, your religion, you are going to have opportunities and not risk the mocking of those people who've been sent to legislate and to govern this province.

Hon Mr Harris: I accept the challenges, I accept the premises and I accept the responsibility. Yes, we have to be accountable. I'm sorry; I agree with everything you said. I said yes. You don't seem to want to accept yes. All of our members and all of our ministers are going to have to accept that in government we are looked at and under scrutiny more. We are going to have to accept that responsibility. It is a responsibility, it is an important one and I have asked our members, my staff, our ministers to accept that. We must set a higher standard. That is our goal and we'll do our very best.

1420

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is also to the Premier. It has to do with some comments you made on the weekend on television, on Focus Ontario, specifically on the tax cut. I think I'm quoting you here properly. When you were asked about your plans for proceeding with the tax cut, I think you said, "The people will say we kept our promise." The promise, as you know, was very specific. It couldn't have been clearer. This is the tax cut: If you're making \$100,000, your tax cut is \$3,740 a year and then you take part of the fair share health levy off. You indicated during the campaign that your tax cut cost was \$5 billion. I want to have you confirm what you said on the weekend, and that is that it is your government's intention to proceed with the tax cut as you promised in the Common Sense Revolution.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think you're getting very close as we start into budget preparation. I said on the weekend that when the Minister of Finance delivers his budget, you, your leader, the members of the public and the media will say, "They kept their promise."

Mr Phillips: I appreciate that. Part of your answer on the weekend also was that whereas you had said that you were going to cut \$6 billion from expenditures, you actually ended up cutting \$8 billion, roughly 33% more. You promised during the campaign that you would not touch a penny of health care, classroom education or law enforcement. All three of those promises have now been broken, because you are cutting \$2 billion more out of the budget than you said during the campaign. It's increasingly clear that your Common Sense Revolution is not what you promised. The jobs are not there, and you promised you would not cut health care, classroom education or law enforcement.

The reason for all of that is because you are dedicated to a \$5-billion tax cut. Even members of your own

caucus, Premier, are beginning to raise legitimate concerns about it. Four thoughtful members of your caucus, individuals who I think have a lot of common sense, have indicated concerns about your proceeding with this tax cut. The question is very simple, and this is what the people of Ontario want to know: If the deficit is such a huge problem, and you're asking OPSEU members out there to be faced with layoffs far greater than you said in the campaign, you're cutting health, you're cutting classroom education and law enforcement to fight the deficit, if the deficit fight is so crucial, how can we afford a \$5-billion tax cut at the same time?

Hon Mr Harris: As the member I think indicated in his question, I had said on Focus Ontario that the Common Sense Revolution document and the financing documents that went with it, which you're privy to—lots challenged them and lots disagreed with them; and lots in fact agreed with them—laid out a number of premises. Based upon the spending that we were told of, that we were campaigning on, based upon the spending of the previous year and the estimates of the New Democratic Party going into the election, we indicated that in order to balance the budget we would have to reduce \$6 billion of that spending.

After having taken office, as you'll recall, the Minister of Finance said there was a \$4-billion discrepancy in the numbers that the NDP had out. We knew of the \$2-billion discrepancy as far as the revenue goes and we had taken that into account. But the spending being \$2 billion in excess was something we really had no way of getting a handle on until we took office. The minister realized that as soon as he took office in July. The \$2-billion NDP cuts to get the spending back to where they said they were were implemented. They were difficult, as I said on Saturday, they were not without pain, but they were part of the NDP budget and reflected the numbers they gave us.

Once we got that back to where it should be and in balance, the Minister of Finance in November announced an additional, over the next two or three years, \$6 billion of reductions on top of that. That's consistent with the Common Sense Revolution, and as I indicated Saturday, we're pretty much on track with that.

Mr Phillips: I think the people of Ontario are beginning to see how crazy your fiscal plan is, and here's the craziness of it: You are going to have to borrow \$20 billion to pay for this tax cut. Nobody out there thinks it makes sense to borrow \$20 billion. You are not going to balance the budget until March 31, 2001. Over that period of time you are going to give a tax cut of \$20 billion, every penny of it borrowed. Can you explain the logic, the common sense in that point of having to borrow \$20 billion to fund your annual \$5-billion tax cut?

Hon Mr Harris: The only borrowing we're doing is to finance \$10-billion deficits, \$100 billion worth of debt run up by you and your party for the first five years, and then the New Democratic Party in the next five years. That is why we are borrowing money. Secondly, we have to cut some \$6 billion in spending, \$2 billion already reduced, so we can stop that \$10-billion deficit, that \$1 million an hour more than we take in. Why are we

cutting taxes? We are cutting taxes so that we can be competitive—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order. Would you come to order, please. Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: We are cutting taxes so that we can create jobs so that we can restore prosperity to the economy so that we can be competitive with other jurisdictions. I understand some other jurisdictions aren't happy with that because they don't want to see jobs leaving their provinces and coming to Ontario, or jobs staying here that were leaving, but I have to tell you that the fact of the matter is that tax cuts will create jobs, will help us meet our goal and will balance our budget in five years. I know you were going to—

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for St Catharines is out of order.

Hon Mr Harris: But at what price? The price is high unemployment. The price is people—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. The member for St Catharines has been continuously out of order and I will not warn him again.

Hon Mr Harris: I might bring this answer to a conclusion by saying that—

The Speaker: Order. The question has been answered.

SECURITY OF LEGISLATIVE PRECINCT

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is for the Premier as well. Mr Premier, last Tuesday afternoon in this House your Solicitor General clearly indicated that he knew complaints had been filed with the police services and the police complaints commission around the events of Monday, March 18. Hansard tells us that he said, "At the police complaints commission, there are already, I understand, two complaints that are possibly filed; at least they've been filed with the police service and may be formally filed with the police complaints commission, and perhaps others will follow." In fact those two complaints were laid on the Monday afternoon and I understand that subsequent complaints have been laid.

Despite that, having apparently viewed the police videotapes because he is Solicitor General and responsible for the police, and with the knowledge the complaints had been filed in front of the police complaints commission, he said on his way into your cabinet meeting, and I quote from a tape that was done of that conversation:

"I think they"—meaning the picketers—"were given fair warning. I think the tape indicates they were given fair warning and that the picket lines broke down. I think there was a breakdown in control by the picket captains and in fact I understand there were even physical altercations between picket captains along the line. I think it indicates that certainly the warnings were delivered in a variety of fashions, through megaphones, through the tapping on shields; those kinds of things occurred."

He went on to give a number of other comments about being sure, having watched the tapes, that in fact the

police behaved appropriately. Now, the Solicitor General was clearly aware of this and clearly he had access to confidential information as Solicitor General, which neither the members of the Legislature nor the public has had access to, and he used that information, I suggest, in a very inappropriate manner.

1430

The Solicitor General must remain impartial regarding police actions, especially since he knew complaints had been laid. He has clearly prejudged and predetermined the outcome of the complaints before the Police Complaints Board, and any further complaints that may be laid.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Would you put your question, please.

Mrs Boyd: Mr Premier, why is the Solicitor General continuing to speak out and defend the OPP's action when there is an investigation under way by the police complaints commission?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): The minister may at some point wish to respond, and if he does, he can by way of supplementary. The police are holding I guess what you would call an arm's length or public inquiry into their actions by calling the police complaints commission. We have agreed to a full public inquiry into all of the events of the day and, as the minister and the House leader have said, somehow or other people don't want to accept yes for an answer. We'll have a full look at all the actions and responsibility that were there, and I don't know what more the member wants.

Mrs Boyd: This issue has nothing to do with the public inquiry, which we support. It has to do with the inappropriate action of a minister of this government, a minister whose responsibility clearly is the protection of all Ontarians, not just the OPP but also all those people on the pickets and anyone else who requires service and protection from police services.

On Wednesday, after those complaints had been laid with the police complaints commission, the Solicitor General went on to say, "As we know, the problems that occurred on Monday were not with OPSEU but with a variety of folks who were involved: the coalition against poverty, the Steelworkers, a whole range of organizations who were out there who had nothing whatsoever to do with OPSEU."

Now, we have the Solicitor General of this province acting as the judge and the jury of the events that took place here at Queen's Park, events that your government has called a public inquiry into and for which there were already complaints in front of the police complaints commission. We've heard him make excuses, we've heard him try to justify the actions of the OPP, and now he even goes so far as to blame others for what happened on Monday.

The Solicitor General clearly knew he shouldn't be commenting on an issue before the police complaints commissioner that morning. He said and I quote again: "Well, I don't want to say anything publicly. I'm going to let everyone reach their own conclusions." But, Mr Premier, he didn't. He defended the OPP's actions and he blamed others.

As the Solicitor General, he has an obligation to remain impartial, and he's clearly crossed the line. He's clearly forgone his impartiality as Solicitor General. Mr Premier, since the Solicitor General has clearly jeopardized the investigation before the police complaints commission by his comments, you have a responsibility to the people of this province to ask for his resignation as Solicitor General. Will you do so?

Hon Mr Harris: The member is probably more learned in the law than I am, but I have not heard one single person involved with the independent inquiry suggest that anything has been compromised. I'm not familiar with what the Solicitor General has said or not said. If you wish to ask him directly, I'm sure he'd be happy to respond. We're going to have a full, independent, public inquiry into the actions, so I've seen nothing that causes me—if you have information otherwise, you could ask the Solicitor General directly—to question the competence of the Solicitor General.

Mrs Boyd: I'm surprised that the Premier didn't hear all the calls for the resignation of the Solicitor General. There was certainly enough noise around here this morning and in front of the Solicitor General's office around requiring him to resign over his behaviour. The Solicitor General's comments have destroyed his credibility, his integrity and his impartiality. The Solicitor General is not supposed to be the chief cheerleader for the Ontario Provincial Police. He's supposed to ensure that the OPP protect the safety of all Ontarians, and that includes people who are exercising their democratic rights on a picket line.

The Solicitor General must remain impartial at all times. The Solicitor General knew complaints had been laid, yet he continued to prejudge and predetermine the ruling of the police complaints commissioner. Your Solicitor General has clearly crossed the line. He must resign. You have no choice, Mr Premier, but to ask for his resignation, and I ask you to do so now.

Hon Mr Harris: I have not seen or heard anything. I understand that Gord Wilson has asked me to do some things. He's asked me to do lots of things that I've politely declined to do in the past. I understand that there are some others, and now you're asking me to do something which I respectfully and politely decline to do.

SPENDING REDUCTIONS

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is for the Premier as well. The Premier said this past weekend that all of his critics are wrong. He said there is no need to make any more cuts. He said the expenditure cuts that have been made so far are all that is necessary to finance his tax cut.

The Minister of Finance, in the November 29 economic statement, says something quite different. He outlines cuts that annualize to \$8 billion. They include three years of cuts to hospitals, two years to municipalities, but only one year for education. The November 29 economic statement is clear that more will be cut from education and that transfer reductions will be announced next year. The Minister of Education, in his press release of March 6, advised boards to expect further savings targets to

transfer payments next year. In other words, both the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Education are saying there are more cuts coming in education.

I'd like to ask the Premier who is right. Are you right that there are no more cuts coming in education, or are the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Education right? Which is it?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): The member premises the question by saying that I said there are no further cuts required to finance the tax cut. There are no cuts at all required to finance the tax cut—none whatsoever. There are none whatsoever.

The tax cut, over the five-year term—and it is a five-year program that we laid out and a five-year program we plan to implement—the tax cut over five years will finance itself. We stand by that: We campaigned on that and we are repeating that today.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order. The member for Welland-Thorold is out of order.

Hon Mr Harris: That means that all of the expenditure reductions, whether you have a tax cut or not, are required to stop this \$1 million an hour more that we're spending, in order to stop the \$10-billion and \$12-billion deficits that have been ignored—

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for Oriole is out of order.

Hon Mr Harris: Quite frankly, as I indicated as well—

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I am sitting six desks from the Premier. Every question that he's answered this afternoon I have not been able to hear. I ask you to start removing those members who do not wish to abide by the rules of this House, which do not permit interjections.

The Speaker: Premier, continue.

Hon Mr Harris: As I indicated, it's difficult to project a year out, two years out, three years out, four years out. As you know, your Treasurer, the Minister of Finance, and Premier tried to predict two months out before the election and you were out \$4 billion. I don't think we'll be out anything like that. So far we're right on with 1994, but I have to tell you, two years from now, a year from now, three years from now, there could be other projections.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. The member for Lake Nipigon, I will not warn you again. You've consistently been interrupting and I won't warn you again.

1440

Mr Hampton: I think it's pretty clear that the Premier may have been a teacher but he didn't teach math.

So let me try again. Another example: The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs said in a speech to the Ontario Cattlemen's Association on February 21 that he will be required to make additional 30% to 35% reductions in the Ministry of Agriculture spending, something like \$156 million. There's no mistake about this. He recounted the \$13.1 million that's already been taken out of the Ministry of Agriculture budget and then went on to say a cut of 30% or 35%, about \$156 million further.

Is the Premier now saying that this \$156-million cut from Agriculture is not required, that this cut is not going to happen?

Hon Mr Harris: I think the same member asked the same question last week, and perhaps his support in rural Ontario is lagging for the leadership. I don't know. But if he wants to get the answer again today, I'd be happy, because the Minister of Agriculture is off promoting our products where our farm community is doing very well.

To date I think you would have seen an enrichment of a number of programs we have committed to in agriculture. Yes, we're looking at streamlining some of the administrative costs, but so far on the program side—

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for Windsor-Sandwich is out of order.

Hon Mr Harris: —in 80%, 85% I think of some of the support programs, you've seen a strengthening of the recognition of agriculture.

As the Minister of Agriculture said when he answered the question last week, if you want information on the budget, wait until the budget comes out, and I think I said as well that those members of rural caucuses and farmers and rural Ontario will say, "By golly, this is a good budget for us."

Mr Hampton: This is not about what the Minister of Agriculture may be saying wherever he is today. This is about what the Premier said Friday and Saturday on an open-line radio show and on Focus Ontario. He said, "No more cuts are necessary."

It's pretty clear to everybody else. It may not be clear to the Premier's arithmetic. It's pretty clear that health care is being cut in this province, education is being cut in this province, law enforcement is being cut and agriculture is being cut. Meanwhile, the Premier proposes to offer up a large tax cut to his already wealthy friends.

Now, is he saying that these two things are totally unrelated? It's clear to everybody else that money is being taken from ordinary people and given to those who are already well off. Are there going to be more cuts or are there not going to be more cuts? Which is it, Premier?

Hon Mr Harris: I think, for those who watched the show, and clearly you've at least been briefed on it, that you would understand that I said the minister had cut \$2 billion to correct your overspending—that was the NDP cuts of \$2 billion in July—and he had announced that we were working on business plans to reduce another \$6 billion in spending—all of this required to get the \$10-billion or \$12-billion deficit under control and balance our books. So within, there are still announcements to be made, obviously, on the \$6 billion of reductions. We're working through the business plans. If all of the parameters stay the same, we feel at this point in time that those would be the amount of reductions that will be required.

That is what I said on Saturday night and that is what I indicated, and that's what I'm happy to repeat today to the member. But let me reiterate that the tax cut has absolutely nothing to do with—this is for jobs. This is how we—

Interjections.

The Speaker: The member for Beaches-Woodbine is out of order.

Hon Mr Harris: —to put confidence back in and ultimately, just as you hiked taxes, cost the treasury money, cost jobs and put more people on unemployment and put more people on welfare, our tax cut will stimulate the economy, create jobs, take more people off welfare, reduce the unemployment levels, and ultimately will increase the dollars back to the treasury. That's how it works and that's what we will do.

EDUCATION SURVEY

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): My question is for the Minister of Education and Training. I'd like to ask the minister about what I consider to be a really very serious matter that has been going on inside his ministry for the past several months. I refer, of course, to the so-called push poll which his ministry has commissioned.

This poll is a different way of doing a focus group. It's a type of poll, though, that is designed to deliberately provoke a negative response towards Ontario teachers. I'd like to give you an example. One of the questions is: "High school students spend five hours per day in the class and teachers spend 3.5 hours. Is this fair?"

It's quite clear that this kind of poll is a way in which you can find a scapegoat, a way you can justify cuts from education, which we believe will amount to over \$1 billion shortly. But what worries me is the method being used, and I believe there's a pattern here.

The member for Scarborough-Agincourt last Wednesday asked a question and it had to do with the intimidation of a secondary school—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Would you put your question, please.

Mr Patten: —or a principal from his riding. Minister, when will you release the poll results, including all the questions? On March 6 when you were scammed when you released your so-called toolkit—it was really a money grab—you said you would be releasing the results in the Legislature. Minister, when will you release those questions in that poll?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I am surprised that the member opposite assumes that the people of Ontario don't like teachers. I think quite the opposite. I think the people of Ontario support classroom teachers.

This government and this minister and I'm sure all the ministers in this government make every attempt to be in contact with the people of Ontario. From September through to this day, I've spent about 25% of my time in the classroom talking to students, talking to parents, talking to the teachers across this province, to stay in contact with people who are involved in the education system.

This government, like governments before, from time to time will go sample public opinion to find out how the public feels about their education system and other important issues of the day.

Mr Patten: The minister is afraid to answer the question. He made a commitment to share the information with this House. I'm asking a simple question: When will you release it? I will also ask you, did your office or any other political office have anything to do with the commissioning of this particular poll?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I'm sure the member opposite knows that polls conducted by a ministry—and there was a poll recently conducted by my ministry to test public opinion about the education system in the province of Ontario. We think that's important. We think it's important to meet the needs of the people of Ontario. Those polls are traditionally tabled in this House—

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for Oriole is out of order.

Hon Mr Snobelen: As the member opposite knows, just before the House broke I tabled the results of a poll made by the former government. This is a normal part of the House.

1450

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): My question is to the Premier. In regard to comments he made over the weekend, headlined in the *Toronto Star* as "Only Cut in May Budget Will Be to Income Tax," he's quoted as saying, "Quite frankly," they were very "spot on," is the term he used in terms of their spending cuts.

The Premier has said repeatedly that the tax cut is about stimulating the economy, growing the economy, that spending cuts are about deficit reduction and that they're not connected. Yet last week the Premier admitted in a response to one of my questions that the tax cut will delay balancing the budget.

We see other comments by other Conservatives over the weekend expressing some nervousness about this approach and the fact that these two things are not connected. People generally see that the tax cut is related to the spending reductions. Specifically, the member for Wellington described the \$5-billion tax cut as "reckless" in a letter to the Premier. In response, the Premier has basically said the other people who disagree with his view are simply wrong.

Mr Premier, my question is: How are they wrong? Is the member for Wellington wrong? And when every economist we've asked agrees that a tax cut will cost at least \$5 million on an annualized basis, how is it the people are wrong when they say that you have to cut spending in order to finance the tax cut?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I think on Saturday one of the people they quoted was Ralph Klein. Ralph Klein had wondered whether we should be cutting taxes. If I had the tax rates of Alberta, I wouldn't have to cut taxes. You see, they're the lowest in the land.

Quite frankly, I understand other provinces, which have been benefiting with jobs moving to New Brunswick and Saskatchewan and Manitoba and Alberta out of Ontario—

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): When are you going to find oil?

Hon Mr Harris: I understand them getting a little nervous with Ontario getting its act together and Ontario getting its taxation rates together, getting its finances together, becoming a more attractive place to invest and create jobs. I understand that. There is a competition, it is a global competition, but it is a competition within Canada as well.

Mr Pouliot: When are you going to find oil?

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order, the member for Lake Nipigon. I'll have to name the member. I would ask him to leave the chamber.

Interjections.

The Speaker: I warned him, the member for Lake Nipigon. I'm not putting up with it.

Mr Pouliot left the chamber.

Hon Mr Harris: We campaigned and continue to govern on a five-year plan to balance the budget, to restore hope and prosperity and jobs and growth to the province. Some want to look at a one-day snapshot. We reduced and rationalized some efficiencies in health care on one day so we could respond it the next day.

All we're saying is that our commitment was a five-year commitment. Over the five years we will honour our commitment to the taxpayers, we'll honour our commitment to balance the budget and we will honour our commitment to make Ontario a much more responsive, friendly place to invest and do business. That's the commitment that we made and that's the program that we are implementing.

I might add—

The Speaker: The question has been answered.

Hon Mr Harris: —the NDP, who campaigned on the Agenda for People—

The Speaker: Order. Cut him off.

Mr Wildman: The question did not relate to the Premier of Alberta. It related to the comments made by members of the Conservative caucus in this place. The member for Wellington and also, I believe, the member for Grey-Owen Sound, who supported him, are the ones who are becoming nervous, along with many people in this province, not just the Premier of Alberta.

They're not talking about the situation in Alberta. They're talking about the situation here in Ontario. The Premier blithely goes on separating somehow the spending cuts from the tax cut, when everyone else understands, including members of his own caucus, that they're all part of the same budget and they're related to one another.

The government says it will have to cut more, at least \$5 billion more, in order to balance the budget and to give the tax break at the same time. Basically, the Premier is asking the people of Ontario to take a great ideological leap of faith to believe that somehow consumer confidence will increase and that we'll have more jobs with that. Any conservative econometric analysis would indicate that in order to implement your tax cut at \$5 billion more, it will result in a loss of about 145,000 to 175,000 jobs—that's your spending cuts to finance that tax cut—and at the very most, the tax cut in itself will create 50,000 new jobs. That's a difference of 95,000 to 125,000 jobs. Aren't those the real figures, and aren't we going to see a net loss of jobs as a result of your ideological commitment to the tax cut?

Hon Mr Harris: No. Any net loss of jobs is to correct the overspending of the last 10 years and the financing of jobs that we clearly can't afford. There may be some streamlining. If we can deliver services more effectively at less cost, I would assume that you would want us to do that. As I've indicated, the tax cut is designed to stimu-

late the economy, to create jobs and ultimately, as it works its way through the system, to create more consumer spending, more sales taxes, more income taxes. Quite frankly, it will benefit the federal government too, as they will get more money out of Ontario.

I am happy to address, if the member wishes, the comments that were made. I think the member for Grey-Owen Sound said all members have the right to represent their constituents and represent their views. I respect members who do so, as did the member for Wellington, and I respect the member for Grey-Owen Sound. Surely, for all members—unlike former governments, that tried to stifle backbenchers and tried to stifle constituents—it is appropriate that if some constituent in their riding comes in and expresses a concern brought out about the misrepresentation of the tax cut by those who are opposed to cutting taxes, the Liberals and the NDP, they ought to have the right to express that viewpoint, and I respect that.

The Speaker: The Chair of Management Board has an answer to a previously asked question.

CLEANING SERVICES CONTRACT

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I'm rising in response to a question that was posed to me by the member for Hamilton Centre last Thursday about tabling material associated with the janitorial services, the bidding process at Queen's Park. I'm doing that today, and the material is coming in.

There were strong allegations of lack of propriety of the tender process. I will say that I've investigated and found the following: that there were in fact five independent Ontario Realty Corp staff who did evaluate the bids; there was a point system which was established based on price, work plan and quality assurance; the winning firm achieved 91 points, the second-place firm 78 points, and the other firms which bid, below that. There were no irregularities; it was a completely proper process that was followed, an arm's-length process that was followed. Thirteen firms prequalified successfully, including the final successful bidder, and five actually did bid on the job. As a result of the acceptance of this tender, there will be a saving, over two years, of \$2.4 million to the taxpayers of the province of Ontario.

Interjections.

Hon David Johnson: Also, in wrapping up, if I'm allowed to wrap up, what I will say is that there was some question of a relationship between an individual named by the member for Hamilton Centre and myself. An individual did contact me under the letterhead of a Scarborough firm. I had no contemplation that this person lived within my riding.

1500

The person himself is quoted in the Toronto Sun as saying we have never talked, and I firmly believe that to be the case. I will say it's one of the ironies of this situation that this individual, who I wouldn't know if he walked into the House at the present time, was a candidate for a federal nomination in the riding of Don Valley East in 1992 for the Liberal Party. Finally, the same

individual was a former member of the Don Mills Liberal Association.

I would say an apology is owed to this individual, to the Ontario Realty Corp staff and to the winning company.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): It would seem to me that if there are any apologies due, it's from this government to those workers who have lost their jobs so that you can pay for your tax cut. The minister will know that I made no direct allegations; I was very careful not to. I was inquiring on information I had and I continue to inquire. But if the minister thinks for one minute that he should take great pride in the fact that he saved \$2.4 million of taxpayers' money by laying off some other taxpayers, he's got a surprise coming. That's not what people are looking for when they look for fiscal responsibility. You ought to be ashamed for even thinking that laying off those hardworking men and women is a way to balance our budget.

I want to say to the minister that there still remains the question—and I accept that he's tabled all the documents and I intend to look through them and review it, because there still remains the question of how it is that out of five bids the four that were not spoken to by the union were not part of the discussions we had here the other day. My question to you is this: Why is it that the four tenderers that did not agree to accept the collective agreement were the ones that were not chosen? The only one chosen was the one bid that did not offer directly to the union to respect its collective agreement and respect the union. That remains a question that I think in all fairness deserves to be answered.

Hon David Johnson: This firm in fact has talked to the union on three occasions, number one.

Interjection: How does he get away with it?

Hon David Johnson: I don't know how he gets away with it.

Number two, one of the reasons that this firm scored highly was because it had the best bid in terms of keeping the current staff and it awarded highest in that category of keeping the current staff.

Finally, the member has said he has not made any accusations. I quote Hansard. I quote the member for Hamilton Centre. He said, "...what your relationship was with Mr Iordanous, and by you, I also mean your staff, because basically what you're doing is calling someone a liar. Either Mr Ferens is lying or Mr Iordanous is lying or you are," meaning myself. Now, if that isn't an accusation of a lack of proper procedure, I don't know what is.

I think there should be an apology to the firm in question, to Mr Iordanous, who had mud slung at him, and to the ORC staff, who I might say are very concerned because basically what is being said is that they haven't followed proper procedure. Will we have an apology from this member?

PINECREST HOME

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, as you're aware, Pinecrest Home in my riding is experiencing a funding dilemma

brought about by the recent arbitration award to the home for the aged's employees. As a result of the December 1995 arbitration award, there exists a \$1.8-million shortfall in funding for this home. I am told that any shortfall will have to be found at the municipal level which, you are aware, is not realistic, noting the transfer reductions to municipalities.

You will also know that the recent arbitration award makes this issue a most unique situation in the province and must be dealt with by you and your government. Clearly, the fate of this home's future is in your hands, and the people who rely on Pinecrest Home in my riding are looking for an answer. What action are you prepared to take to ensure the viability of Pinecrest Home?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): This matter was brought to my attention some time ago, and I would just remind the honourable member that the Ministry of Health has no say in a decision between a home and its employees and an arbitrator's decision in that regard. We did, however, support the government's provision in Bill 26 to ensure that arbitrators in the future take into account the employer's ability to pay.

At this time, we are worried about maintaining quality and standards in that home. Ministry staff have had discussions with Pinecrest to make sure, with the funding shortfall or with the pressure from the arbitrator's award, that quality will not suffer and that the residents of that home receive the top quality they're entitled to in this province. However, at this time we don't have the dollars available to Pinecrest to help them with the arbitration award.

Mr Miclash: You talk about the future; I'm talking about a situation that is presently in my riding. I have families out there, I have residents out there looking for help from your government. What are you saying in terms of the board's request for a one-time grant to help them through this dilemma that they face?

Hon Mr Wilson: The home did recently submit a new operating plan to the ministry. It contains savings in administration and other operating measures which should help to alleviate the pressure created by the arbitrator's award. Staff is currently reviewing that operating plan, and we'll be getting back to his constituents and the operators of the home in the near future.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): My question is to the Premier. Premier, in the interview that you gave on the weekend on Robert Fisher's Focus Ontario, you were asked a question regarding successor rights and the role they're playing in the OPSEU strike. Your answer to Paula Todd of the Toronto Star was, "They were given by the NDP." We all know that any legislation or policy, whether it's good for Ontario or bad, if it had NDP fingerprints on it, that's as good as the kiss of death.

Given the fact that I'm sure your staff have since advised you that indeed successor rights were put in place in the Crown Employees Collective Bargaining Act, that part of which was enacted in the 1970s, I would ask you, is it that you don't understand the circumstances around

one of the key issues in the OPSEU strike, or were you deliberately trying to mislead the people of Ontario?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Let me be careful on the one hand in trying to respond on the other. The blackout is still on. We're at the table. We're trying to resolve a very difficult situation that's there.

I had indicated—there may have been some confusion and I talked to the media about this afterwards—that there was a succession of governments in a number of areas, in Ottawa and in Ontario, that had never contemplated that the public sector would ever have to downsize, that we were immune to that—that somehow you could go on running up deficits, spending money. Where the private sector had a number of negotiated agreements dealing with successor rights, also within their contracts was a vehicle where ultimately, at the end of the day, they could actually downsize without having to wait five or 10 or 15 years. This was not the case. So I indicated that the federal government had brought forward legislation to deal with that, and so had we.

I also indicated on Saturday night that it was our goal, and I don't know where the negotiations are at, but in general terms, it is our goal to be as fair and as reasonable as we possibly can with all of our OPSEU workers and non-OPSEU employees of the government of Ontario who may, if attrition is not satisfactory or if a number of other areas that we believe—retraining and education and some of the other provisions are there, that if there actually have to be layoffs, that we treat those employees with dignity and with fairness. That's what I indicated on Saturday.

1510

Mr Christopherson: I think that for the tens of thousands of OPSEU members who are on strike, they're going to find it very distressing to realize that the Premier who took away their successor rights in Bill 7 didn't even understand when those rights came into being and thought it was one of the NDP lightning rods that he had to go after.

The fact of the matter is that not only did the Premier not understand Saturday night the issue of successor rights and when they became law and who brought them in, he did not talk about taking away successor rights in the election campaign. The Premier and his party did not put in the Common Sense Revolution any comment about taking away the rights of public sector workers with regard to successor rights.

Further to that, Bill 7—which was not an amendment to the Ontario Labour Relations Act; it was a complete replacement—when it was rammed through the House with absolutely no public hearings which you have to account for, you left tens of thousands of people without rights that they've had for decades and you had no mandate to do it.

We said at that time that functioning in that fashion, taking away those rights, not allowing fair, democratic procedures to take place, would lead to serious trouble, and look what's happening on our streets now. Premier, we say again, this is only the beginning and it's only people responding to you attacking them. When will you realize that Bill 7 and all that it does in taking away the rights of workers and the way you rammed it through in

that undemocratic fashion is going to continue to make our streets what you've already made them? That can't be good for working people, it can't be good for the government and it's certainly not good for investment.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): What is your question?

Mr Christopherson: My question is, Premier: When will you realize the damage and havoc that Bill 7 is wreaking and put amendments on the floor and put real dignity and fairness and democracy back into labour laws in this province?

Hon Mr Harris: I think dignity and fairness will come with adults negotiating at the negotiating table. That's what we are doing, that's what David Johnson is doing and I believe that you will see that by correcting problems of the past, balancing labour legislation, the \$10 billion to \$12 billion that you spent you didn't have, the people you hired you had no money to hire, bigger government, government taking on more than it was capable of doing—correcting this is not easy, but that is in fact what we were elected to do, to correct an absolute abhorrent mess of regulation, of legislation, of massive buildup of debt.

Quite frankly, while it's taking time, we are on track, jobs are being created. Every job creator I've talked to—that's somebody who actually plans to invest five cents of their own money to create a job—has told us that there is a better climate for job creation today than there was when the NDP were there. Every private sector job creator—these again are the ones who plan to risk their own house or their own money or make their own investments—says, "If you will carry through on the agenda, it will be even better in the future." And we want those jobs, not in Alberta, not in the United States, not somewhere else, we want those jobs that we deserve and should be had right here in the province of Ontario, and we're going to get them.

NORTHERN AIR SERVICE

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. Since the announced closing of the money-losing government airline norOntair, there has been concern expressed by some that the private sector would not adequately serve northern Ontario.

Opposition parties have speculated, for example, that as many as nine of the 16 communities in northern Ontario that norOntair serves will be left without a carrier after March 29. Can you update the Legislature on this situation and tell me what you, as minister, are doing to help ensure that air service continues to northern communities?

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): I appreciate the member's question. I'm proud to inform the House that we have been working closely with the communities in northern Ontario that have been served by norOntair. Almost right from the start, the private sector indicated its intention to enter and remain in 13 of the 16 communities inside Ontario or 14 of the 17 communities served

all over Ontario. I'm pleased today to inform the House that the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission has announced that an interim contract has been finalized with Voyageur Airways to serve the remaining three communities. I think that's a very positive step.

I would like to talk about another situation in regard to this. That was Atikokan, which was formerly served by norOntair and which was cancelled by the NDP a few years ago. I know there's been a lot of discussion around the fact that a subsidy was offered to Atikokan last year by a former minister. I can inform the House that we have completed that deal. It was a good deal. It saves the taxpayers a tremendous amount of money. It's cheaper than subsidizing a whole airline and it allows the private sector to thrive in northern Ontario. The assets go back into ONTC to help the ONTC's other operations remain viable and enhance economic development in northern Ontario, and I think that's a very proper thing and a positive step for northern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The time for oral question period has expired.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Pursuant to standing order 34(a), I'd like to advise you of my dissatisfaction with the response of the Minister of Education and Training and therefore I will be filing the appropriate papers with the Clerk in order to have what's called a late show.

PETITIONS

CHILD CARE

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): This is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it says:

"Whereas the government has decided to replace our current child care system with one that lacks compassion and common sense and is fraught with many dangerous consequences; and

"Whereas the concept of affordable, accessible and quality child care is a basic important fundamental right for many members of our community who are either unemployed and enrolled into a training program or are single, working parents or where both parents are working; and

"Whereas if our present provincial government is sincere in getting people back to work, they should recognize the value of the child care component of the Jobs Ontario program and acknowledge the validity of the wage subsidy to child care workers;

"We therefore, the undersigned residents, business owners and child care providers of Metro Toronto, urge the government of Ontario to immediately restore the funding to the child care system of this province to the previous levels."

I've affixed my signature to this document.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE PENSIONS

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have a petition here signed by 200 or 300 citizens from the community of Timmins and it's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

"Whereas Bill 26 exempts the government as an employer from key legislation governing pensions in Ontario; and

"Whereas employees of the Ontario government have been stripped of their rights to access pension security, a right that other workers in Ontario have; and

"Whereas this represents the theft of hundreds of millions of dollars in pension benefits from working people; and

"Whereas as a result thousands of workers who face being laid off in the upcoming months could be forced into poverty,

"We, the following undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to reinstate the rights removed by schedule L of Bill 26."

I am signing that petition.

EDUCATION POLICY

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): I submit to the Parliament of Ontario a petition signed by hundreds of Parkdale residents on behalf of the Parkdale Public School Community Association, expressing concern to maintain the quality of education in the city of Toronto and calling upon the government to support classroom provision of special education, services to immigrants and inner-city allocations of staffing to establish equity in education for students that are not calculated as extra-to-classroom education.

The petition also calls upon the government to recognize inner-city standards as part of provincial guidelines for equity of outcomes for all Ontario students as well as the need to work towards a goal of fair tax reform that does not discriminate against higher-density communities and the need to emphasize in policy reform a commitment to public education as a basis of maintaining a healthy urban centre in Toronto.

1520

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that the North York Branson Hospital merge with the York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final

report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I have affixed my signature.

CHILD CARE

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I have a petition here regarding child care. It's signed by approximately 26 persons and I'm presenting it on behalf of the member for Simcoe East.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have petitions here from Pearl Mackay and Dan Gilbert on behalf of the United Food and Commercial Workers. They read as follows:

"Petition to the Honourable Elizabeth Witmer, Minister of Labour:

"Whereas we, the undersigned, are opposed to your government's proposed changes to Ontario's workers' compensation system including elimination of the bipartite board of directors; reduced temporary benefits; introduction of the three-day period from the time of injury with no pay; legislated time limits on entitlement, thereby excluding repetitive strain, chronic pain and stress claims from eligibility for compensation; reduced permanent pensions and pension supplements; and

"Whereas workers' compensation is not a handout; it is an insurance plan for which premiums are paid; it is a legal obligation that employers have to employees who 80 years ago traded their right to sue employers in return for this insurance plan;

"Therefore, we demand no reduction in existing benefits, improved re-employment and vocational rehabilitation, tightened enforcement of health and safety to prevent injuries, no reduction in current Workers' Compensation Board staff levels and the bipartite board structure to be left intact."

I proudly add my name to theirs.

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Bernard Grandmaître (Ottawa East): I have a petition addressed to the Legislature of Ontario which reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, request that the Legislature of Ontario not approve any tax cuts until the causes of poverty and unemployment in Ontario are dealt with effectively and until the province's debt and deficit are paid down."

I have signed this petition.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): On Friday, March 22, 1996, I was presented with three petitions and an open letter from the striking Ontario Public Service Employees Union members who visited me at my constituency office.

The first is a petition to the Legislature to reinstate successor rights for public service employees, and it's signed by 141 people.

The second petition is with respect to the rights outlined in schedule L of Bill 26, and it's signed by 157 individuals.

The third and final petition is a request for the government to allow the size of the Ontario public service to be reduced through attrition rather than staff reductions, and it's signed by 140 people.

The open letter that accompanied these petitions was signed by 424 individuals and outlined how the union could implement its 30-point plan to reduce costs.

I promised I would present these petitions and open letter to this House, and I've done so.

ST THOMAS PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL

Mr Peter North (Elgin): I have a petition here with a number of signatures, some of the 16,000 signatures that we've got on this particular petition. It says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That a recommendation by the Psychiatric Hospital Restructuring Committee to close the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital be rejected.

"We believe the restructuring committee has not fully considered the case for retaining St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital.

"We believe the hospital and the community of St Thomas provide care and caring for psych patients which is equal to, and better than London.

"We believe closure of the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital will have a devastating impact on the economy and the residents of St Thomas and Elgin county.

"We believe London can better absorb the impact of closure of the London Psychiatric Hospital.

"Finally, we believe it would be cheaper for government to retain the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital in terms of capital improvements required to both facilities.

"Therefore, we request that the government refrain from endorsing and implementing the recommendation to close the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital."

I thank you, Mr Speaker.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas acknowledging the serious situation in Ontario with regard to the size of the present deficit; and

"Whereas being conversant with the fact that transfer payments from the federal government are being drastically cut and resulting in an acute need for the overhaul and streamlining of the Ontario government's expenditures; and

"Whereas due to changing world trade patterns, the economy of Ontario is in a state of transition and not performing at top capacity, thus creating a situation where numbers of Ontarians are unemployed and many

families, including their children, are suffering great hardship;

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, petition the Legislative Assembly to take into account the suffering of the underprivileged residents of Ontario, particularly the children, and to reconsider the recent 20% cut to their incomes. Further, to postpone indefinitely, in the name of compassion, the tax rebate of 30% promised in the recent election, thus enabling the largest possible number of residents of Ontario to be properly fed, clothed and sheltered."

I've signed my name to it as well.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the members of the Ontario public service are earnestly attempting to negotiate an equitable and respectful collective agreement with the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas a fair collective agreement is evidence of this government's respect for Ontario's public services, the workers who provide them and those who need them; and

"Whereas by introducing Bill 7 and Bill 26 prior to commencing negotiations the government removed significant rights from OPSEU members that other workers in Ontario retain; and

"Whereas reducing the size of the civil service can be achieved through attrition without attacking basic rights and dignities of hard-working people;

"We, the following undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to negotiate responsibly and in good faith with the Ontario Public Service Employees Union towards a fair and respectful collective agreement."

I agree with this petition and I have signed my name.

GLENORA-ADOPHUSTOWN FERRY SERVICE

Mr Gary Fox (Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings): I have a petition today to reopen Glenora ferry.

"It is now past the 19th day of the OPSEU strike. As concerned citizens of Adolphustown township and surrounding area, we are asking you to intervene on our behalf to get the Glenora ferry back in service.

"The Glenora ferry is an essential service, an extension of Highway 33, which is absolutely necessary to get us back and forth to work, school, to visit doctors, dentists etc, and to conduct various aspects of our daily business.

"Ambulance service to and from Picton is now at a standstill. The absence of this service has created hardship for many of us, both financially and personally. As an example, one local merchant has reported a 40% to 50% drop in his business since the onset of this strike.

"As well, it is extremely difficult to add two or three hours of commuting time per day to already busy schedules. If the ferry cannot be reopened full-time during this ongoing strike, then we would suggest it be reopened for the core hours of 6 to 9 am and 5 to 8 pm."

RENT REGULATION

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislature.

"Whereas the Harris government is planning to remove rent controls; and

"Whereas the removal of rent control legislation breaks the campaign promise made by the Conservatives during the election; and

"Whereas a great number of tenants are seniors and people on fixed incomes and many have had their income cut by 22% due to social assistance cuts and cannot afford increases in their rent; and

"Whereas growing unemployment and the scarcity of affordable housing in Metro makes the removal of rent control an even greater disaster for tenants and for people who cannot afford to buy homes;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario keep their pre-election promise and not remove rent controls and continue with the Landlord and Tenant Act and Rental Housing Protection Act."

I affix my name to this petition.

1530

ST JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition to the Minister of Health and the Hamilton-Wentworth District Health Council:

"Whereas the Hamilton-Wentworth Health Action Task Force, as part of their report, has recommended the closure of St Joseph's Hospital in Hamilton; and

"Whereas it is recognized the health care system should be made as efficient as possible; and

"Whereas the quality of health care service in our community should not be sacrificed in the name of efficiency; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government promised to protect the quality of health care in Ontario; and

"Whereas we, the undersigned, believe that maintaining the presence of St Joseph's Hospital in downtown Hamilton is a vital component of our health care system,

"Therefore be it resolved that the Minister of Health and the Hamilton-Wentworth District Health Council ensure the continuance of St Joseph's Hospital at its present site."

I add my signature to theirs.

SCARBOROUGH GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I rise today to present a petition on behalf of the Friends of Scarborough General Hospital. This morning at my constituency office, the Friends of Scarborough General Hospital, including Chair Gerry Quinn, several Scarborough firefighters and many residents, including the Armstrong family, presented me, as MPP for Scarborough Centre, a petition from over 9,000 Scarborough residents. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the recommendations of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council to close inpatient paediatric

beds, the special care nursery, and the burn unit at Scarborough General Hospital resulting in significantly reduced access to paediatric, newborn, and burn care for a large geographic area of Scarborough; and

"Whereas the paediatric unit, special care nursery, and burn unit at Scarborough General Hospital provide very cost-efficient, quality care,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to (1) continue paediatric services, including inpatient paediatric beds; (2) continue special care nursery services; (3) continue and combine Metropolitan Toronto's burn care at Scarborough General Hospital."

I am pleased to affix my name to this petition.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): I have a petition to the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads:

"Whereas the members of the Ontario public service are earnestly attempting to negotiate an equitable and respectful collective agreement with the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas a fair collective agreement is evidence of this government's respect for Ontario's public services, the workers who provide them and those who need them; and

"Whereas by introducing Bill 7 and Bill 26 prior to commencing negotiations, the government removed significant rights from OPSEU members that other workers in Ontario retain; and

"Whereas reducing the size of the civil service can be achieved through attrition, without attacking basic rights and dignities of hardworking people;

"We, the following undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to negotiate responsibly and in good faith with the Ontario Public Service Employees Union towards a fair and respectful collective agreement."

I have attached my name to that petition as well.

CORRECTION

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Earlier today, the pages of the House were introduced, and only for the reason of correcting the record I am pleased to say that the name of the page who is here from Essex South is Kelly MacTavish. I am pleased to welcome her.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The point is well taken.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FREEZING OF COMPENSATION OF MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 GELANT LA RÉTRIBUTION DES DÉPUTÉS À L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

Mr Eves moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 32, An Act to fix the Indemnities and Allowances of Members of the Assembly at the Levels in effect on

March 31, 1996 / Projet de loi 32, Loi fixant les indemnités et les allocations des députés à l'Assemblée aux niveaux en vigueur le 31 mars 1996.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it the pleasure of the House that this bill carry? Carried.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): Just very brief comments: This bill freezes the compensation of members of the provincial Legislature at current levels, which have been in effect since 1993, and prevents an increase of 5.5% scheduled for April 1, 1996. This increase would have returned the compensation to the levels in effect before the start of the three-year social contract put in place by the previous government. We do not support that increase, and it's my understanding, having discussed this matter with the other two House leaders, that they do not as well.

We are committed to reforming the compensation system for members of the assembly and abolishing the gold-plated pension plan that goes with it. We will be replacing the current system with one which is straightforward and fair as soon as possible.

In conclusion, I think you will find that there is unanimous consent to call this bill as the first order of business today and to proceed with passage of all three stages of the bill at this time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Agreed? Agreed.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY AMENDMENT ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

Mr Flaherty moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 33, An Act to amend the Legislative Assembly Act / Projet de loi 33, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'Assemblée législative.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Do you wish to make any comments?

Mr Jim Flaherty (Durham Centre): This bill amends the Legislative Assembly Act to provide that a member of the assembly shall not receive any indemnity as a member for a period during which the member is suspended from the service of the assembly.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

FREEZING OF COMPENSATION OF MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 GELANT LA RÉTRIBUTION DES DÉPUTÉS À L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE

Mr Eves moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 32, An Act to fix the Indemnities and Allowances of Members of the Assembly at the Levels in effect on March 31, 1996 / Projet de loi 32, Loi fixant les indemnités et les allocations des députés à l'Assemblée aux niveaux en vigueur le 31 mars 1996.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Any comments, Minister?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): I've given my brief introductory remarks with respect to this bill on first reading. I understand that the other two House leaders have a few comments to make as well.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): There is, I think, unanimity in the Legislature on this. Members of the Legislature, I am certain, at no time had any thought that there would be an increase, even though under the social contract, coming out of it, there would normally be an increase or at least placing members back where they were when they were cut back by 5%.

We have agreed to this six-year pay freeze that we're now in the middle of, and it is agreed that although others may be in this position, we as members of the Legislative Assembly shall not revert back to our position at the time of the social contract's passing in this Legislature.

I, as one member, and I'm sure all members of my caucus, at no time anticipated that this would be the case. We were not aware until last week that a bill would be necessary for this purpose, but I think you'll find, at least in our caucus, unanimous consent for this legislation.

1540

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): We too will be supporting this legislation, but I do want to make one thing clear: We are not talking about a piece of legislation to eliminate a pay increase. The legislation that is being dealt with today maintains the pay reduction that was put in place through the social contract legislation. I believe we are the only workers at the provincial level that by legislation have taken now a permanent pay reduction, which is fine. We understand that. That's the leadership we all were called on to provide. But I think it is inappropriate for anything to be reported that this legislation prevents a pay increase, because it was not a pay increase.

We have taken, as the House leader for the official opposition has said, a six-year pay freeze, and in addition to that, in the six-year pay freeze there's been I think a 5.5% reduction. So for six years we've not just had a freeze; we've had a reduction. Fine. That's part of the economic circumstances the province was in during the recession. But I think it would be inappropriate if anybody in this Legislature tried to score political points by saying this bill was going to prevent some kind of a pay increase. That was not the case. This bill is necessary as we await the overall reforms on pension and pay that the government is having a tough time figuring out.

The Acting Speaker: Any further debate?

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Agreed.

Mr Eves moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 32, An Act to fix the Indemnities and Allowances of Members of the Assembly at the Levels in effect on March 31, 1996 / Projet de loi 32, Loi fixant les indemnités et les allocations des députés à l'Assemblée aux niveaux en vigueur le 31 mars 1996.

The Acting Speaker: Any comments? Any further debate? Shall the motion carry? Carried.

Resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

ADVOCACY, CONSENT
AND SUBSTITUTE DECISIONS
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1995
LOI DE 1995 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'INTERVENTION,
LE CONSENTEMENT ET LA PRISE
DE DÉCISIONS AU NOM D'AUTRUI

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for third reading of Bill 19, An Act to repeal the Advocacy Act, 1992, revise the Consent to Treatment Act, 1992, amend the Substitute Decisions Act, 1992 and amend other Acts in respect of related matters / Projet de loi 19, Loi abrogeant la Loi de 1992 sur l'intervention, révisant la Loi de 1992 sur le consentement au traitement, modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur la prise de décisions au nom d'autrui et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui concerne des questions connexes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): I believe the member for Fort York had the floor.

Mr Rosario Marchese (Fort York): I'm very happy to resume my remarks on Bill 19.

This Conservative government has said no to the Advocacy Act, a Conservative government that has said no to the Advocacy Commission, a Conservative government that has said no to rights advisers, and a Conservative government that has said no to advocates.

They haven't listened to the opposition members and they certainly weren't listening to the many deputations that came in front of our committee, from whom I learned a great deal.

I want to list again a few other organizations that came before our committee: Dixon Hall Neighbourhood Centre; the Ethno-Racial People with Disabilities Coalition of Ontario; Family Association for Mental Health Everywhere; Family Mental Health Alliance; Geriatric Psychiatric Services; Hospital for Sick Children; International Association for the Right to Effective Treatment; Intervention des sourds francophones ontariens; London Battered Women's Advocacy Centre; Medical Health Centre; National Action Committee on the Status of Women; Neighbourhood Legal Services; Niagara Mental Health Survivors Network; Ontario Advocacy Coalition; Ontario Association for Community Living; Ontario Advocacy Commission; Ontario AIDS Network, Ontario Association of Professional Social Workers and many, many more.

I just wanted to continue with the list so people get a sense of all the deputants that came in front of our committee, many of whom attempted to speak to the whole issue of advocacy and to remind the government that what it was doing by repealing the Advocacy Act was wrong.

It's important to remind the public about these deputations so they don't get the feeling that it's simply a member or some members of the opposition who are opposed to it just because they're in opposition. I am opposed to it, as indeed are our caucus and many other members, because we have listened to what the people said and to what they told us, not just in Toronto but in Thunder Bay, Windsor, Ottawa and Peterborough and so on, everywhere in fact, through all the letters we have

received. So I wanted to continue by putting on the record a number of things that have been said by these grass-roots organizations that are very closely connected to the communities they serve.

This is a deputation by some concerned citizens associated with Centretown Community Health Centre who are users of mental health services, and they said:

"After many years of consultation, we finally got government"—meaning the NDP government—"support for advocacy, and now the new government is starting the process all over again. We are tired of having to start from point zero, tired of having to educate yet another bunch of politicians. The government should be continuing what the people asked for."

They're not continuing with what the people had asked for for 15 years. In fact, they're discontinuing it by repealing the Advocacy Act.

The Ontario Advocacy Coalition said the following:

"The announcement that the Advocacy Act is to be revoked has been met with dismay, consternation and anger by those of us who over the last 15 years have studied, discussed, written, presented, argued, demonstrated and compromised in the interests of obtaining legislation to protect vulnerable people....

"The underlying theme and purpose of the Advocacy Act was to empower vulnerable people by helping them to understand their rights and the choices available, assisting them in carrying out their wishes and providing mechanisms whereby they could participate in the process of developing advocacy services.

"That many of our most vulnerable adults suffer from maltreatment at the hands of their caregivers, either family or institution, is no secret, as witness the number of court cases and coroners' inquests which have come to the attention of the public through the press."

You have such a coalition, involved in the field for many years, working in the field for 15 years, telling us why the Advocacy Act was important, telling us about the court cases that have been around and have been part of what has informed them and us about why we needed the Advocacy Act. And what does this government do? It doesn't listen. It says no to advocacy and it says no to the Advocacy Act.

Another submission, by A-WAY, says:

"We cannot assume that all people have a voice; many do not and many never will. However, many could develop that voice with the proper tools and education and time. Many could learn to advocate on others' behalf with the proper tools."

They had the tools, they had the Advocacy Act, and this Conservative reform government has eliminated, repealed the Advocacy Act. They've taken away a tool that gave them a voice and substituted those tools for other tools that introduced user fees in Ontario. That's what they've done. They have taken away effective tools that gave people a voice and have created other tools that allow municipalities to introduce user fees. Those are the tools they have given to municipalities that allow municipalities to increase taxes indirectly, and they've taken away a tool that gives vulnerable people a voice. That's what this government is all about.

I continue with another submission made by ALPHA: "The rush to pass this extensive bill is disconcerting.... Contrary to misinformed press reports, the Advocacy Act, 1992, provided assistance to vulnerable adults so that they understood their rights and could express their wishes if they had difficulty doing so on their own, for whatever reason. The act supported the development of strong family relationships, where possible. The act specifically required advocates to encourage the involvement of the family. However, if the family/caregiver was abusive, an advocate could have supplied support to assist the person to find other living arrangements in the community."

1550

ALPHA, the Action League of Physically Handicapped Adults, says it provided assistance to vulnerable adults so that they understood their rights and could express their wishes. The act supported the development of strong family relationships and specifically required advocates to encourage the involvement of the family, and where there was abuse, they could be there to provide assistance to persons to find other living arrangements.

This Conservative government, this reform government, has said no to all of these things. They say: "No, we're not in this business. We shouldn't be providing it. Other people are." ALPHA says that is not the case. ALPHA came to tell us why we needed the Advocacy Act and this government will continue to permit abuses to happen because we now no longer have the tools, through the act, through the Advocacy Commission and advocates and rights advisers to get to that abuse.

So this government that cares, that said no to advocacy—how this government could abandon these vulnerable people is beyond my comprehension, but their day of reckoning will come and they will have to explain to the public in due time why it is they believe that somehow advocacy should be done by somebody else, by volunteers who are already doing it, by family members who are already doing it and by agencies, some of whom are doing it where they have the money to do it.

With this government having cut 5% in community agency support, it means that those who were providing it will have yet less support to continue doing it and those who have never had the money will not be able to do it. That's what that means. That's what this government is doing. It's abandoning people with disabilities and vulnerable people, frail seniors on their own, bringing us back to the years before Father Sean O'Sullivan came with his report to tell us why the government needed to be involved, bringing us back 15 years to begin again, where those communities, having had their say and having had a government that listened to them, have to come back to plead with you not to do it.

You didn't listen. None of you listened. Not the committee members and not this government and not Mike Harris was listening, because if any one of you were listening, you would not have repealed the act; you would not have taken away the most useful tools that people had to have their voices heard.

But you don't have to explain it to me, those of you who are nodding your heads; you will have to explain it to the public when you get to them. If not now, you will

have to get to them during an election and you will have to tell them why it is that you feel that somehow it is not the job of government to advocate, but the job of volunteers and family members, and some of those agencies that have the few dollars which you have not yet taken away to do that job.

PUSH, Persons United for Self-Help, in northeastern Ontario region, said the following:

"Advocacy is so much more than doing things for people. Advocacy is about teaching those who can become knowledgeable and learn to exercise the franchises given to them as residents of Ontario.

"The paradigm has shifted. Society is moving from doing for persons with disabilities to accepting the principles of self-determination, personal autonomy, empowerment, self-advocacy and integration. The resulting implication is a shift of power. The need for the power shift is clearly evident: People with disabilities suffer much abuse and exploitation at the hands of the powers that control their existence. A necessary step in the paradigm shift is the education and empowerment of people with disabilities.

"Advocacy is an important factor in the equation of helping affected people obtain equitable and fair treatment to assist them in living full and active lives. That's what the Advocacy Act was all about. It was about empowerment, it was about allowing people the right to be able to make decisions with assistance and it was about helping people obtain equitable and fair treatment to assist them in living a full and active life.

"You've taken that away. You've taken that away by saying no to the Advocacy Act. You've taken one of the few tools that allowed them that voice and permitted empowerment to take place. What you will do is to make them as dependent as they always have been, and they wanted to be independent. They wanted the tools for autonomy, and you have taken that away, rendering them again disabled. You have disabled them further by taking one of the only tools they had to be empowered.

"It is a shame on this Reform Party to have done that, and you will pay the political price. But more than the political price, you will pay the social price for all those vulnerable people who have lost their voice."

Reading on from another deputation, Jennifer Wilcox said: "Although advocacy may seem like common sense to a lot of us, good sense is not always common and ethical treatment of vulnerable persons is not always the rule.

"These questions that I'm about to pose are directed at elected government officials determined to repeal the Advocacy Act. These personal and rhetorical questions are meant simply to provoke thought, which may or may not lead to positive action in the best interests of vulnerable persons."

"Have you ever had an adverse day in your life? Have you ever felt vulnerable to the point where you perceived that you were at the mercy of others? Have you ever been a party to despair, anguish, desperation or been crippled with fear? Have you ever questioned the fibre of your very being? Have you ever known poverty?

"Have you ever known, loved, cared for or been involved with a vulnerable person?"

These are tough questions that they ask all of us, but in particular government members. They plead with you, they were pleading with you to give them a voice and you are taking away, have taken away that voice by repealing the Advocacy Act. There's as much need for advocacy today as there ever was. Unless and until attitudes change and rights awareness is increased, the rights of vulnerable persons will continue to be violated.

We all are at risk of becoming vulnerable persons. Advocacy is not just something that someone else needs. The day may come when you are vulnerable. Who will help you to know, to understand and fight for your rights? An advocate, no doubt.

But you, as a government, have decided that you are not an advocate, that you're not in the business of advocacy, that it costs too much: \$18 million was too much; \$7 million, the point to which you've reduced that commission, is too much. They asked for \$3 million, which many of these deputations agreed with and supported, and you said, "No, that is too much." The commission came and pleaded with you to leave something in place so the work that has begun would not be completely eliminated—\$3 million to do community development, to do education, to do systemic work, systemic advocacy—and you said, "No, we don't need that," that you're consulting with a few people out there, asking them what they think we need, and all you have come up with in committee is: "We need to help the volunteers do their job better. Agencies are doing it already, families are doing it. We've got to give this work back to the families." That was your answer.

1600

For 15 years these groups have come to successive governments, your own included, the Liberal government and the NDP government, asking for something from government, which was an advocacy act, a commission, advocates and rights advisers. We gave it to them because we believed it was important to listen to people who were deeply and well connected, well rooted in their communities, who understood the vulnerabilities of people. We delivered and you have taken that away. You have taken that away with six simple words that say "An Act to repeal the Advocacy Act." That is all you said; six simple, little words to undo 15 years of work. It is a shame on this government, I can tell you that.

"Overall," Len Maki from Thunder Bay says, "we would encourage the committee to review the decision to totally repeal the Advocacy Act, believing that some form of rights advice is essential for people with disabilities in a democratic and just society. We understand the need to be cost-effective in this procedure but hope that this government does not simply throw away all the hard work, time and money already spent by dedicated bureaucrats, community representatives and volunteers, including people from consumer groups like PACE, in establishing the Advocacy Act."

You didn't listen at all during all of those hearings. You didn't listen to any one of them. You allowed yourself to be informed by the doctors and a few lawyers who told you, "We don't like advocacy." You listened to them, but you didn't listen to all of the groups that I read for the record, and others which I did not have time to

read. You did not listen to the Windsor Essex Community Advocacy Network. You did not listen to a number of other organizations that are here; there are too many to mention—Survivors of Medical Abuse. You didn't listen to the Queen Street Patients Council and countless others.

You didn't hear what they told you, that you are repealing, taking away a voice, that after 15 years a government listened to, that said to them finally, "You will have a voice through the Advocacy Commission, through the act, through the advocates," who had right of entry to be able to get into an institution where it was well-known there might have been abuses and deal with them. You have taken that away.

If a government is not for advocacy and if a government says, "We're not in the business of advocacy," then what is your role? You've abdicated an important responsibility and you might as well leave as politicians, because nobody needs you. If you are not there to advocate for them, then who are you there for? This is repellent, what you have done, and I hope the community will vote you out of office very shortly.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Tony Clement (Brampton South): I would like to thank the honourable member for his two-day remarks. The honourable member is quite adept at quoting Father Sean O'Sullivan and his report, which seems to be the touchstone of advocacy and the policy that related to the former NDP government. He did allude to the fact that the advocacy role, as suggested by Father Sean O'Sullivan, was for family and friends; the role of the government was for education and support.

The honourable member seems to liken himself, in terms of his morals and in terms of his intentions, to Father Sean O'Sullivan. I would say to him that I knew Father Sean O'Sullivan. Father Sean O'Sullivan was a friend of mine, and the honourable member for Fort York is no Father Sean O'Sullivan.

The honourable member felt that by our policies, vulnerable adults would be abandoned. But I would say to him that the very abandonment he fears is created, is enhanced, is brought forward when government, through its involvement, tries to do things better left to friends and family, to the people who love the vulnerable individual. It is when government gets involved that people say: "Well, somebody else is handling it. Government is handling it. I don't have to worry about it." Is that the moral context we want for our society? I would say to you that no, it is not.

I would say to the honourable member that an Advocacy Commission, even when simply doing one tenth of its role, was costing \$10 million, until April 1—\$750 per phone call; that's how much it was costing the taxpayers of Ontario. Surely it is better to rely on friends and family.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): When there is any debate in this House on the Advocacy Commission, I always have wished that those members who were debating the Advocacy Commission could have sat as members of the committee of government agencies, boards and commissions, which I chaired at the time the appointments were being made to the Advocacy Commission.

If there was ever a question about the purpose and the potential for success of that commission, all you had to do was attend and see who was being appointed as commissioners and how they dealt with the questions from all three parties on the ABC committee. They could not even define what the commission to which they had just been appointed was about, they could not define what advocacy in that role meant, they had no comprehension of what it was they were going to be doing in terms of their personal responsibilities, and each and every person who came who was appointed had their own particular version of what the Advocacy Commission for the province of Ontario was about. It wasn't about something overall that was to make life better for the vulnerable people in this province; it was to deal with their own personal problems. That was a very serious deficiency that broke down the whole concept of advocating on behalf of vulnerable people.

I have been the spokesperson for people with disabilities for a number of years in this House for our party, for at least five years, and I was gravely troubled by the Advocacy Commission and its role.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I want to take a brief opportunity to congratulate and compliment my colleague the member for Fort York. I've known him now for about six years, and anyone who has known him for that length of time, or even much less, would know that the issues of human rights and dignity and fairness and democracy are cornerstones of why he is in public life.

Whether we were sitting in the caucus room in government or whether it was decisions at the cabinet table or here in opposition, the member for Fort York constantly puts forward, even when they're unpopular, as certainly some comments were last week to some of the backbenchers on the government side—he constantly thinks of those who have the least amount of power, who may be wronged by our systems; a recognition that systems are imperfect and that governments have a role to advocate.

I had the opportunity to be here last Thursday both to hear his comments on the special day of recognition and also his entire speech and was here for the balance of it today. I want to clearly go on the record as saying that I know of no one who works harder, who cares more and who is more prepared to put himself on the line time and time again in the interests of those who do not have power. There is no benefit to this member in raising these issues other than that it's the right thing to do.

When I listened to him go through the litany of issues this government has taken on and the amount of damage this government has done in the area of human rights and dignity—you know, they're very good at mouthing the words, but when you look at their actions, they tell a different story. I think that's what the honourable member for Fort York has done over these last couple of days: He's pointed out what this government has done wrong and pointed out why we have an obligation, as parliamentarians, to do better.

1610

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I'd like to make a few comments to the member for Fort York's remarks. I must say I always respect the member for Fort York. I

understand what he believes in. I don't agree with much of what he has said this afternoon, but I respect him for making those comments.

We had this debate during the committee session. He spent great time in referring to depositions, and he has the right to do that, but there were a number of problems that were listed at the hearings as well which he failed to mention in his comments. He may not have time to talk about that, but briefly, they are as follows:

Under the present law, advocates can delay the appointment of a guardian, thus potentially compromising the welfare of the incapable person. That is a fact.

We have found that the existence of the advocate under the existing law is costly. Each meeting with an advocate is estimated to cost about \$300.

We have felt that often the advocate is ineffective, given the ability of the individual, the disabled person, the person who needs assistance to comprehend the information is frequently limited or nonexistent by virtue of the mental incapacity. My friend from Fort York failed to comment on that.

It is possible that the involvement of the third party, the advocate—and this is one of the most serious complaints that we heard, at least while our government was in opposition—may exacerbate emotional distress for the individual and his or her family, or encourage irrational objections. That was one of the major concerns of the Advocacy Act and the Advocacy Commission. Yet my friend from Fort York failed to spend any time that I could hear of in the hour and a half—and I've listened very carefully to him for an hour and a half—talking on that topic.

We felt that the necessity of giving an independent third party has been questioned. There is no question, I'm sure, that the member for Fort York received similar concerns from caregivers, family and the legal profession that maintain it suggests distrust and represents an unnecessary duplication of services.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Fort York, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr Marchese: I thank the members for their responses. I thank my colleague the member for Hamilton Centre for his kind remarks and return to the enemy for the rest of the time.

Could all of these close to, approximately 150 deputations, community-based organizations be so wrong? Could 150 organizations be so wrong? The communities that are so well connected to vulnerable people, could they have been so out of whack, so out of contact with their communities that we would have to listen to these kinds of questions raised by the member for Dufferin-Peel?

The member for Brampton South says I'm no Father Sean O'Sullivan. He's absolutely right. My name is Mr Marchese from Fort York. He's absolutely right. Secondly, he says it's best to leave this work to families and not to government. I just don't understand that. For 15 years people have been saying they wanted what the NDP has put into place. They said that abuse happens in families. We have the statistics to prove it. They said: "The volunteers who are in place are not enough. We want governments to do their job." Father Sean O'Sullivan said

as much. You should not get yourselves out of the way as a government. You should be directly implicated and not leave the abuse to continue to happen and not leave it to volunteers who don't have the means to deal with it.

The member for Dufferin-Peel talks about cost, the cost of \$300 to be with an advocate. Is that what it's all about? Did you not learn a thing from all of those deputations and all those community-based organizations? Is that your concern? You say they're ineffective. That's completely untrue.

The member for Mississauga South, you should know better. Nine of those 17 people came from the community, well connected to those communities. I'm surprised at you—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you. Your time has expired. Please take your chair. The member for Scarborough-Ellesmere.

Hon Marilyn Mushinski (Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation): I want to add some words of support for the legislation that my colleague the Attorney General has tabled for third reading.

Let me start off by saying that I have no doubt the previous government did have the best intentions when it created the Advocacy Act, the Substitute Decisions Act and the Consent to Treatment Act. These three pieces of legislation, however, raised concerns that I think are both compelling and serious.

If one thing became clear during the committee hearings on Bill 19, it is that many people in this province care very deeply about vulnerable adults in Ontario and that they have some means of acting on their wishes and their rights. But the best intentions can lead to unworkable legislation. The people of Ontario, especially the most vulnerable people in Ontario, deserve better.

One thing that I believe every person in this House can agree on is the need to focus support where it is needed. Let me assure you that I have very strong personal feelings on this issue. Like many of you who served on the Bill 19 committee, I have become quite familiar with the sentiments expressed by Father Sean O'Sullivan in his 1987 report, *You've got a Friend*. Father O'Sullivan asked us all to get involved. He said: "Ontarians need to be advocates. Most of us already are. We can do more. If we are to improve our society, we must."

Governments must be accountable to the people they represent, including those who are most vulnerable. But as Father O'Sullivan recognized, "When a government takes action, it must be grounded in reality." That is the flaw in the previous government's legislation. If a government program is going to be effective, it must take into account the realistic needs and demands of the people who have to live with it. I believe this is particularly true in the area of support for vulnerable adults.

The previous government clearly took this issue seriously. What else could have driven them to implement an unwieldy piece of legislation like the Advocacy Act? But clearly, the act did not take into account the subtlety and diversity of the challenges facing vulnerable adults. It showed a certain disregard for large parts of the existing network, including many of the supports provided by families and volunteers. Instead of working with these groups of people and building on the services that

they already provide, it attempted to duplicate them with an expensive and inefficient government-funded agency of professional advocates.

Father O'Sullivan wisely recognized the importance of families and volunteers. "Primary responsibility for advocacy," he said, "must remain with us as individual citizens, as families...as neighbours of Ontario's vulnerable population." From this perspective, I think it becomes clear that government should concern itself with the most effective ways it can to support that network of caring people, not replace it.

Ontarians have always shown enormous compassion for vulnerable adults. During the public hearings on Bill 19, that compassion, along with Ontarians' determination, energy and expertise, was clearly evident. The interests of vulnerable adults had gained a great deal of momentum, particularly over the last decade. There is now a large pool of accumulated experience and expertise. What government should be most concerned with now is how to effectively support that experience and allow it to be shared for every Ontarian.

1620

During the election campaign and since becoming minister, I've had the opportunity to speak with many families and caregivers. I continue to be impressed and moved by the depth of commitment that all Ontarians across this province share in finding ways to support the interests of vulnerable adults and reduce the incidence of abuse and neglect. This government's approach, which I will be announcing in the next few weeks, will address these issues.

A number of points have been made time and time again throughout this process, not infrequently by the members opposite. To me, these points reflect the core concerns of this issue for all of us. We need community-based solutions that build on, not duplicate, the good work already being done. That means the system must add something rather than just duplicating things that are already being provided.

In the end, Father O'Sullivan concluded that an effective advocacy system would involve a sharing of responsibility between the people of the province and their government. This government listened carefully to the presenters who appeared before the standing committee on Bill 19 and the many individuals who have provided input on the role the province should have in supporting the dignity and autonomy of vulnerable adults. We have heard very clearly that there is a need for improvements in several areas, including finding ways to direct people to information or expertise they have not been able to locate in their communities; coordinating education and training; and developing better links between people and groups providing services to vulnerable adults.

Let me assure all members of this House that this government does recognize the role that government can play and, like Father O'Sullivan, we also recognize the limits to what government can do. Establishing a new and complex bureaucracy is not a good way to address the challenge. An \$18-million Advocacy Commission did not resolve many of the concerns of vulnerable adults. Indeed, in its first few months of operation, the commis-

sion worked its way through \$5 million worth of public money without making an appreciable difference in the lives of vulnerable adults in Ontario, which just goes to show that money alone does not solve problems. Caring and dedicated people do.

Perhaps this was the biggest weakness of the previous government's approach. It did not embrace two of the most vital components of any system designed to address the needs of vulnerable people. It did not promote cooperation and it did not enhance the role of the system's most valuable contributors—families and volunteers. At some point, bureaucracy must give way to the heart and the soul of services for vulnerable adults, that is, caring volunteers. Our government and my ministry will call on the strength of our families, the knowhow of the people in the network of agencies and services in communities across Ontario, and the dedication of health care professionals.

Bill 19 is a necessary step. As Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, I look forward to its passage and to the day when the compassion and determination of Ontarians in communities all across this province more effectively and efficiently address the needs and concerns of our most vulnerable citizens.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): I will be participating in this debate later this afternoon, but I must say to the minister, the comment I would make and the question I would ask of her is, where is your legislation? I remember during the election campaign participating in a TV program with the now Attorney General, on this very issue and on others, where there was a recognition that legislation was necessary and required. To put action to the fine words that she says, I think the expectation is that there will be legislation, and yet we know from the direction that the minister has given to her advisory committee that it is not her intention to bring forward legislation.

I would say to her that she refers to the work of Father Sean O'Sullivan, she refers to the issue of advocacy in particular, and we know that over the course of time, for those who say that Father O'Sullivan said, "Leave it to friends and family," that is not what he said. The minister knows that; the member for Brampton South knows that.

Father Sean O'Sullivan called for a shared advocacy model. He said very clearly that there is a role for government, there is a role for friends and there is a role for family. There's a role for those organizations and community groups that traditionally, with very few resources, have been looking after those who are subject to abuse, whether they are in institutions or whether they are in their own homes or whether they are vulnerable in the community and homeless.

For anyone to suggest that the minister's fine words will be turned into any kind of action by this government, I would say that I am very sceptical. In fact they were fine words; I agreed with everything that she had to say. But the comment that I would make is that if she means it, let her bring forward legislation.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Building on what my colleague the member for Oriole said, let's read

what Father Sean O'Sullivan actually said on page 8 of his report.

"The implementation of shared advocacy will occur over a period of two to three years. The first step is the establishment of a provincial advocacy commission with a clear mandate to provide non-legal advocacy services to vulnerable people residing in all institutions and care facilities and in the community.

"Responsibility for the provincial program is vested in an independent advocacy commission which is to be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. The commission will report to the Legislature through the Attorney General or a redesignated standing committee on the Ombudsman and advocacy.

"Legislation should be developed which also contains clear statutory authority for trained and certified advocates to have access to institutions and care facilities where vulnerable adults reside, and, in the case of those living in the community, the right to meet in private.

"The legislation should also provide authority for certified advocates to have access, with the consent of the patient, to the patient's medical and treatment records.

"The commission would maintain a small central office with staff experienced in the following areas: training and education, the needs and concerns of frail elderly, developmentally disabled, psychiatrically disabled and physically handicapped persons, and relevant legal issues.

"Direct advocacy services would be provided through regional offices covering the province and through local advocacy programs."

Every time this government gets up and invokes the name of Father Sean O'Sullivan, they should be ashamed. He did not say what they say he said. He said very clearly that, yes, family and friends and volunteers are needed to be part of the picture, but we need legislation. We need an independent advocacy commission, and we need trained advocates who can have access to institutions, have access to patient records, and that is the only way we will be able to ensure that the vulnerable in our community are safe.

Mrs Marland: That's the whole point, I would say to the previous speaker from London: Volunteers have to be part of the picture. But what the opposition has never been able to understand is that as soon as you start paying people to advocate, then you discourage those people who previously advocated as volunteers.

It's very interesting, because the people who refer to Father Sean O'Sullivan are the people who, in my opinion, have manipulated the vulnerable people of this province. Those of us who have sat in this House and seen these people brought to the members' gallery, paraded in with different problems and different challenges and used publicly to make a point that they wanted to make in arguing for advocacy of individuals—the access to records with the consent of a patient: What about a patient who isn't able to give consent? I'm sorry, do you really want to give that access to personal medical records of a patient when the patient isn't able to give the consent to someone who is a paid advocate who couldn't even describe what the job and the responsibility was about, for whom there was no specific training laid out, no job description laid out? Yet they're saying that access

to records of a patient would have been okay. My goodness. If it wasn't so serious, it could almost have been many situations that would have been truly heart-breaking if it had gone ahead.

1630

Mr Marchese: First of all, to the Minister: Father Sean O'Sullivan said the following, "Primary responsibility for advocacy education, and the development and support of advocacy services is the proper role of government." Why do you take whatever he's said in vain? Why do you distort things so badly? Why do you deliberately do that? It wouldn't be so bad if some of you were so innocent and didn't have a clue, but some of you have experience. It is embarrassing.

He said the following as well, "The evidence presented to the review identified a clear need for a coordinated and effective advocacy system in Ontario." He said there is no coordination out there. The government needs to coordinate it, not volunteers, not family and not friends. It's the government. So what you have done—

Mr Tilson: It didn't work.

Mr Marchese: "Didn't work"? Mr Tilson, please. You have been here so long, you and the member for Mississauga South, that your comments are almost offensive. The commission had barely began to do its work. They were only there for four or five months and you tell me it didn't work?

You reform people, reform-minded politicians were not listening. It's not so bad that you don't listen to me. You did not listen to the countless organizations that are well rooted in their communities. That's what's wrong. I don't mind if you don't listen to me, I understand that, but that you should smile when I say that, Madam Minister, and smile at the fact that you have said no to the countless deputations that said, "Don't do it; it's wrong," is a shame.

To the member for Mississauga South, who has had so many years of experience in the field, her remarks offend me deeply. Volunteers cannot do the job; they cannot. It's governments that do the job of advocacy.

The Acting Speaker: Minister, you have two minutes to reply.

Hon Ms Mushinski: I find it curious how the honourable member for Fort York can comment so much on my speech, given that he missed three quarters of it.

Certainly, in response to the member for Oriole—

Mr Marchese: What did I miss?

Hon Ms Mushinski: I guess none of the members opposite took the time to read my July 26, 1995, news release, where I clearly announced that the new plan that we would be bringing forward after consultation with the community would be non-legislative. The public has known since July 26, 1995, that it would be non-legislative. Let me repeat again that we agree that it is the role of this government to be involved in protecting the rights and dignity of vulnerable adults. As I suggested in my speech, I will be announcing the plans for the framework within which to do that and to ensure that, rather than continuing to berate this government for all its efforts to involve all the volunteers and all the families I feel have been insulted personally by the member for Fort York today.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): As we come before the House today to talk about Bill 19, it's interesting, and I think maybe I'm in the twilight zone as I listen to what's being said by both the New Democrats and the government.

I sat through committee hearings on this bill for some number of weeks. I sat through with the member for Ottawa East, the member for Timiskaming and the member for Oriole, listening to people make presentations. One would believe, if you listened to the debate so far, that this was strictly about whether the Advocacy Commission will remain in place. The government's made that decision—it will not remain in place—but it has not made the important decision, what will replace it? We on this side find that to be incomprehensible.

There is a need. We listened to group after group come before us and talk about vulnerable people. We listened to them talk about how they had difficulty making their wishes known, how the system did not always support them, how the system did not always help them have control of their own lives. It was compelling testimony. You could not sit in those committee chairs and not be moved by the stories we heard from individuals and from groups about how there is a need to advocate on behalf of vulnerable individuals.

While the model the previous government put in place I don't think was the correct model, it is not good enough to say that nothing should replace it. It is just not good enough. We've heard a commitment from the government, and we will be watching very carefully over the next few weeks to months to see the announcements they intend to make on how that advocacy can continue.

But having said that about the Advocacy Commission, we should maybe tell people that this involved much more than that. This is a very complex bill, a very legalistic bill, that will affect Ontario and Ontario's families for many years. People should know that it also affects the Consent to Treatment Act, the Substitute Decisions Act and many other acts in this province.

I want to speak for a minute about the Substitute Decisions Act and the living will idea that this group of bills puts into place. As a constituency politician over the last eight or nine years, I don't think I have ever had more demand than for the kit for people to make their power of attorney. The demand was unbelievable. We were always requesting the government to have more kits distributed to our office, because it was absolutely incredible, the public interest and the public demand for these particular documents which permitted people to make their own wishes known in a format that was readily available.

I think one of the things we need to be telling people is that those forms they filled out and those wishes they addressed will remain in place, that it is not necessary for them to go out and do this all over again. It's very important that we get this message out. I know the people who were very interested across my constituency don't need one more thing to worry about. Often, people are concerned when a bill like this comes forward: "Oh, no. I thought I'd got it right two years ago, and I'm going to have to go do this whole thing again."

I sat through the committee hearings back in 1992 or 1993 when we went through this bill for the first time, and I remember the great interest of the now Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations in the whole area of living wills. As a matter of fact, he put forward to this Legislature a private member's bill, I believe probably on a number of occasions, but the last time in about 1991, in which he advocated for this. The Conservative Party during those hearings in 1992—that was their interest. Their interest was to make sure that powers of attorney for care and for personal decisions could be put forward; in other words, living wills.

1640

As Mr Sterling—that's what he was interested in. He was not terribly interested in the other parts of the bill, and that's fair enough. That's why he was there; he was there to make sure that we got the powers of attorney for personal care and treatment taken care of.

I just wonder whether anybody over in the Conservative caucus really understood the rest of this bill. I don't recall whether they voted against it in 1992 or not. They may have; I just don't remember. But they were focused on a single issue in this, what we used to call the advocacy package. I would just call on the minister to come forward with their plan, with their legislation, because the vulnerable people, it's clear, need some government involvement and it's not enough just to criticize a former government; you must, in my view, put forward your own system, your own plan and your own legislation.

I think about the people at Club 90 in Elliot Lake, for example. I think about those folks in my own constituency who have told me there is a need for advocacy, there is a need for people to be looked after. Unless the government moves forward as it said it would—and we will be watching—quickly, this whole plan or this whole event of just repealing one part of it and fixing a number of other parts that I agree needed fixing is just not enough and it's not the Ontario that any of us want to live in.

With that, I will sit down and wish to hear comments from other members.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mrs Caplan: I'd like to start by complimenting my colleague, not only for his thoughtful comments today but for the excellent work that he did on committee. I think his understanding of the issues and his appropriate challenges of the government position resulted in the government bringing forward some amendments that, as was described to me, actually knocked some of the rough edges off this piece of legislation.

Mr Brown, the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, was an excellent contributor on the committee. I think his thoughtfulness, his understanding and his important advocacy on behalf of his constituents enhanced the experience that I had at the committee. I wanted to make those comments because we don't often have an opportunity to let people know the work that members do on committee and I think Mr Brown's constituents would be and should be very proud of the contribution that he made at committee dealing with advocacy, substitute decisions and consent to treatment. The issues are very complex and I know that he at all times had the best

interests of his constituents when he was making his presentation before the committee.

I conclude the few minutes by saying congratulations to Mr Brown and thank you to him for the important work that he did on this piece of legislation.

Mrs Boyd: I too worked with the member for Algoma-Manitoulin on the committee and I want him to know that I really appreciated the care with which he listened to people who came in front of the committee. It reflects what he said about the worry he has about his own constituents. This is about people; this is about vulnerable people; this is about people who are in a position where they may never have been capable of making their own decisions, and where they have been capable but have gradually or suddenly lost that capacity. It is very important for us to be very clear that where people are in that kind of situation, their feelings of vulnerability, their very real vulnerability needs to be taken into account by all of us. We as members of the Legislature are here on behalf of all citizens, but no more so than on behalf of those who are most vulnerable and who cannot speak for themselves.

The issue around the Advocacy Act and the issue around rights advice, the issue around what is told to people and how they are informed about their rights throughout these three bills are extraordinarily important to their feelings of confidence, that we as a community respect them, that we will not allow medical treatments or acts of change to their property to go ahead without due process; without their, first of all, being informed that they are incapable and then knowing that they have rights of appeal. That is the crux of this matter.

Certainly my colleague Mr Brown was very active in trying to get across to the government the need to replace the Advocacy Act and mandatory rights advice with something in this act. Unfortunately, although they may have heeded him on some things, they did not heed him on that.

Mr Tilson: Just a few comments on the remarks made by the member for Algoma-Manitoulin: Many members, particularly in the opposition, have said, what is the Advocacy Commission going to be replaced with? I think that was one of the issues that was raised by the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, and I hope he's not suggesting another commission. I hope that's not what he's suggesting, because our belief was that the current philosophy, that was put forward by the NDP, was that they were going to interfere. The government was going to come in and do things, whether you wanted it or whether you didn't want it, and that's why all those kits were obtained. Every member of the previous government gave away thousands upon thousands of those kits for powers of attorney. And why? Because people were terrified. They were terrified that government was going to come in and interfere with their estate. That's why that happened.

I can tell you that our government believes—

Interjection.

Mr Tilson: Well, you're agreeing with me, but I'll tell you, that's why our government believes that the government should only intervene as a last resort. Members of the family, friends, people who are appointed under

guardianship, those are the people who should be assisting people who need assistance. The government should only come in when there's no one else. I hope the member isn't suggesting that we should do what the former NDP government did and create a commission. They created a commission for everything.

I'm telling you that the intent of this legislation is to use the government to assist people only as a last resort and to act in situations where guardians or others who are acting inappropriately can come along and take action against those particular people, and that's the sole reason why we've brought forward this legislation.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I would just like to talk about the last issue that the last speaker talked about, and Mr Brown as well, and that deals with respect to the whole notion of powers of attorney etc. Having worked in this area for some 25 years, I can attest to what both of these gentlemen are talking about to the extent that during about a six-month period of time—and I don't know whether it was the result of misinformation or whether it was the result of erroneous information—people somehow got the impression that if they did not have a power of attorney and if something were to happen to them, somehow the government would just walk right in and take over. That was the common perception out there.

I don't want to get into any finger-pointing as to whether or not it was the fault of the former government or whether or not it was an inadequate method in which they distributed the information to people etc; I really don't want to get involved in that. But it really addresses the one issue, and that is, no matter what government does, no matter what new activity it gets involved in or what new methods of doing things it's advocating etc, the information that is given to the general public must be accurate and correct.

Whatever happened the last time around, the general public, which isn't as knowledgeable about these matters as either the professionals or the people who deal with making laws, as we are in this body, was left with the impression that if they did not have a power of attorney and if something were to happen to them, the government would step in unilaterally and take over. I know that was not the case and so does just about everybody here. Information about new programs has to be sent out to people in a direct, unobtrusive fashion so they know where their rights stand and how they're going to be affected.

1650

The Acting Speaker: The member for Algoma-Manitoulin, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr Michael Brown: I appreciate the comments from the members for Oriole, London Centre, Kingston and The Islands and Dufferin-Peel. I appreciate the comments about the powers of attorney. I think Mr Tilson, however, exaggerates. There was an element of fear, but there was also a sincere desire for people to have their own wishes carried out in the manner in which they wished them to be carried out. In my constituency office, I would think that was the primary motivation for people requesting the kits.

Fear, unfortunately, was there. I don't know where it started; it was exaggerated. But there were some problems. Hopefully, the new legislation addresses those, and I think those problems have been addressed. But I would tell people, I think it's a good idea to have a power of attorney. I don't think you should be afraid if you don't have it, it's not the end of the world, but it allows you to express your own wishes about how you wish to live your life. That makes perfect sense to me and should to most Ontarians.

I appreciate the other comments. This is a very complex bill, and you will not have gotten even the technical parts perfect. I think they're an improvement, but they aren't perfect. The member for Oriole presented tens, possibly as many as a hundred amendments to this bill in an attempt to fix the parts that would be difficult. Some of our amendments, very few, were accepted. It's important, however, to remember that governments will probably be revisiting this issue again.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Further debate?

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): I really appreciate the opportunity today to put a few thoughts on the record re this really important piece of work happening within this Legislature, to raise some red flags and caution and to share with the people here some of what I'm hearing back home in my own community.

I hope to help some of the folks out there, by some of the things I will say, understand why this is a bad piece of legislation. If they don't understand the technical aspects of it or understand that for the last year and a half they've been coming into offices and getting packages of documents to fill out forms that fit into a piece of legislation we had passed, and now all of a sudden the whole thing is going to be changed, they should at least in the pit of their stomach recognize there's something definitely wrong going on here and should be raising some alarm and asking some questions. They should understand, if we're not able to stop this piece of legislation, that when it finally unfolds and comes into play they've lost some very valuable institutions and opportunities to challenge systems and to get what's rightfully coming to them or to protect rights they have, or even to protect their very person.

I don't want to get into a very technical discussion today, because others have done that and others will do that. Rosario Marchese, the member for Fort York, has very eloquently spoken in detail of some of the concerns re this piece of legislation and what it will undo and how it will take us back when we were beginning to move forward and make some progress.

I want today to first of all give some kudos to the United Steelworkers of America. I yesterday spent a good part of the day at a workshop they put on around the question of racism and anti-racism in the province and their concern, their very real concern, about these issues and about any attack on vulnerable people. By way of setting a context within which this piece of legislation is coming to the fore that will help us understand how it even is consistent with what this government has been doing and continues to do to the most vulnerable among us, I want to share with you some thoughts that were put

on the record by the Steelworkers who came in front of this committee as it went around the province in the intersession to hear from people and to help them put their concern and understanding of what was happening on the record. It goes like this:

"We know what it's like," the Steelworkers say, "to have in place an effective and very powerful advocate on behalf of working people. We look to our union to defend us, to assist us, to speak for us, to educate us, to empower us, to ensure our dignity, our safety at work, our rights, and to better our daily working lives." That helps us to understand the need for advocacy and it sounds awfully familiar to me as I worked with my colleagues and others in trying to put in place the bill that we brought forward so proudly when we were in government.

"Finally, we also have an interest as ordinary human beings who live within families and communities.... Both of us...know people," as does everyone in this room, "who are developmentally disabled, who are psychiatrically disabled, who are physically disabled, who have terminal diseases, who are elderly and frail, who live in institutions, who are infirm or chronically ill.

"These are our friends, our family, our neighbours, our associates. Although we love and care for them, many of us live impossibly busy lives" and are often "unable to meet their special needs or be there when they need us. That helps us, I think, to understand the urgency of advocacy...."

I couldn't have said it better myself.

In Ontario today, there are more vulnerable people than ever before, and by the time this government is finished, that will even have doubled and quadrupled. Most estimates range as high as half a million. We think our society should be judged by how we treat these vulnerable members of our community. It's no secret that in our view, the record of the current Conservative government is nothing short of shocking. Let me list for you a few of the things you've done to attack very vulnerable people in this province, which speaks loudly and clearly to the need for some advocacy provision for those people supported by government and funded by government.

"Cutbacks to welfare payments have reduced the real income of thousands" of vulnerable people "who rely on general welfare or family benefits. User fees under the Ontario drug benefit plan have added a new cost for seniors and people with disabilities. The threat of a revised definition for disability leaves many anxious about their eligibility for pensions and access to dental, drug and extended health care plans.

"The repeal of the Employment Equity Act effectively puts an end to job opportunities and accessible workplaces for the disabled. Cutbacks to education have inevitably removed the money for assistants and assistive devices in the classroom. Cutbacks in legal aid threaten the rights and abuse protection relied upon by many disadvantaged people.

"Massive reductions in transfer payments have severely limited access to transportation for the disabled. The downloading of services and costs to municipalities has closed community programs designed to reach out to and

integrate vulnerable people. Bed closures at psychiatric hospitals and institutions for the developmentally challenged have left many literally on the street in the absence of any community support.

"The cancellation of co-op and non-profit housing slammed the door on vulnerable people waiting for accessible and affordable accommodation. Cutbacks in emergency housing or shelters leave little room for seniors or people with disabilities who have been abused in an institution or in their own home.

"All of these government actions abandon, we feel, vulnerable people to marginal and unfulfilled lives, marked by poverty, isolation, unemployment, abuse and discrimination. Each government action, alone and collectively, is a mark of shame...."

Anybody out there who doesn't understand the real intent and purpose of this act needs only to put it in the context of the list that I've just read for you out of this submission by the United Steelworkers of America to understand that it is going to be hurtful, and it's going to be hurtful to those people in our communities out there who are least able to deal with it themselves.

1700

And this is just the beginning. We've only been here about eight, nine months now, if that. This is just the beginning. These folks have another three and a half years left. If ever this province needed to have in place a strong advocacy voice for those who are most vulnerable among us, it is now and in the next two or three years. You're taking that way and you blame it on the cost in some ways. Well, the cost to people, the cost to human lives, when you stack it up against the minimal cost to have in place an Advocacy Commission, it just pales in comparison.

I end there. I wanted to put those thoughts on the record. They're really important and I think that people need to really understand that all of the things that this government is doing, including this piece of legislation, is targeted directly at those who are most vulnerable in the province of Ontario today.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Christopherson: I would just like to mention very briefly that my honourable colleague from Sault Ste Marie talked about a workshop that he attended with the United Steelworkers. I think it needs to be said very clearly that the labour movement in Ontario has a very proud history of being on the cutting edge of fighting for issues, not only at the bargaining table but also matters of human rights and other issues of importance to ordinary working people who, quite frankly, do not have the same means as others who are very wealthy and who have a lot of money who can hire all the kinds of care that they need.

We always need to recognize and remember that the labour movement has played a crucial role in fighting for the rights of people who are not necessarily their dues-paying members and that they're not this evil entity that the government likes to portray when it suits its cause, like now during the OPSEU strike.

I, for one, as a former union member and union leader, have been active in the labour movement, long before I got into public life, and know very much the proud

history that the labour movement has in these areas. I think it's important that Tony Martin today took the opportunity to put the work of the Steelworkers on the record so the people of Ontario can recognize the benefit the labour movement has made to issues that are of importance to all Ontarians in terms of their rights. I want to thank him for doing that on behalf of the labour movement and those people who have contributed.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions or comments? Seeing none, would the member for Sault Ste Marie like to sum up?

Mr Martin: I just want to thank my colleague for his comments and support of what I said and certainly his support of the United Steelworkers of America. Certainly in Sault Ste Marie they have been a very progressive force and I'm always wanting to sit up and pay attention when they speak. The presentation that they made to this committee is consistent and in keeping with the very excellent work that they do as they speak out on behalf of people in our communities, working people, poor people, vulnerable people, and to give them voice, a voice that they often have a hard time finding.

Yesterday at the Steelworkers' hall in Sault Ste Marie it was the third anniversary of a day that they organized to focus on the question of racism and to have speeches given by various and sundry people from across our community, leaders and others from various organizations to speak on the question of how today even yet we still have to struggle with that question, which certainly contributes to the need for us in our community to have some method of advocating on behalf of those who become targets.

The Steelworkers have done some really excellent things in Sault Ste Marie. When we were in difficulty as a community in the early days of the city, they set up a credit union. When we had difficulty getting health care for ordinary folks and for workers in Sault Ste Marie for a myriad of reasons, they set up the Group Health Centre. For the last three years in the Sault they've organized these forums on anti-racism and have highlighted the need for all of us to be concerned and to pay attention. As well, they consistently presented a wonderful brief to this committee and I would hope that the folks out there would pay attention and listen and speak to their members about this piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John L. Parker (York East): I am pleased to join this debate today to register my strong support for Bill 19, which is now before this House for third reading. This legislation will streamline and simplify the current law and will eliminate unwarranted government intrusion in the lives of vulnerable and incapable people, and those who care for them and those who care about them. As you know, the Health Care Consent Act, an important part of Bill 19, replaces the Consent to Treatment Act which was enacted by the former government. It is to these provisions of the bill that I intend to confine my brief remarks this afternoon.

It is not my intention to rail on about the flaws and inadequacies of the existing act. On the whole, I think it does many good things and addresses some important concerns. But it was clear to us, and it was clear to the

people who administer the act's provisions day by day, and it was clear to the thousands of people who are affected by these provisions and who wrote to the government and phoned our offices, that there are serious flaws in the Consent to Treatment Act. It is to address these concerns and to correct these flaws that this government, through Bill 19, is replacing the Consent to Treatment Act with the Health Care Consent Act.

No one can argue with the overall objective of the Consent to Treatment Act. It was to establish clearly the right of capable Ontarians to make their own informed decisions about health treatment and to provide an effective mechanism for treatment decisions for those who are not capable. But one certainly can argue that these good intentions got translated in many areas into a set of extremely bureaucratic and confusing laws. Since the Consent to Treatment Act was proclaimed last spring, many of us have heard the stories of health practitioners or other caregivers and family members who have been unable to understand and work their way through the legislative red tape in their efforts to provide care to incapable patients or loved ones.

The result was that, for many, a visit to the hospital became akin to a visit to a courthouse, and questions of medical judgement and clinical advisability became subordinated to questions of legal evidence, procedure and authority.

The Consent to Treatment Act creates adversarial barriers between health care providers and families. It insists on state intervention that can, and did, lead to unnecessary delays in treatment, and in the end it has left some of those it sought to protect worse off than before. In vast numbers, the people of this province have told us that they find this unacceptable. As a government, we find it unacceptable. As lawmakers, it is our responsibility to make the necessary changes to legislation to ensure that it is clear and understandable to those who must work with it and acceptable to those who are affected by it. This is why we moved to repeal the Consent to Treatment Act and replace it with the Health Care Consent Act.

At this point I'd like to thank the many individuals and groups who appeared before the standing committee on administration of justice during the public hearings on Bill 19 just this past February and who offered concrete suggestions on how to improve the draft Health Care Consent Act. I'd also like to express my thanks to the opposition committee members and to my committee colleagues on the government side for their thoughtful recommendations and debate during the committee hearings and clause-by-clause review.

We did not always come to agreement, but I believe that each person in the process, each deponent who appeared before the committee and each member of the committee distinguished themselves by their demonstrated commitment to arrive at legislation which is at the same time good law as well as comprehensible and practical. I say "comprehensible" because getting the wording right and making the definitions clear is, I believe, one of the significant aspects in which the new legislation offers improvements over the existing law. It is not useful to have good legislation if the people who are required to

operate under its provisions are in a chronic state of confusion and fear as to its meaning.

I'm pleased to report that, in my view, the system worked. The government has produced legislation which is a clear improvement over the law it replaces. The committee process assisted us in crafting modifications to the detail of the bill which add clarity, precision and in some cases important, substantive additions to its content. The result, I submit, is a much more realistic and workable consent framework than is provided under the current law, one which provides a much better balance between the rights of individuals and the need to provide prompt and appropriate care and treatment.

1710

Let me take a few minutes to describe just a few of the more important components of this new framework.

First, the new act has removed the unwarranted government intrusion that has too often delayed timely treatment, including the controversial and counterproductive requirement for formal rights advice. It has always been our view that the Consent to Treatment Act provisions for rights notification and advice were overly repetitive, bureaucratic and adversarial. Instead, we believe there should be latitude for rights information to be discussed with sensitivity among health care professionals and their patients or clients and in an informal, unbureaucratic manner that best fits each individual situation. For this reason, the Health Care Consent Act mandates the governing body of each regulated health profession covered by the act to develop guidelines for its members in providing the appropriate information to people determined to be mentally incapable.

Let's be clear about one thing in all of this: The Health Care Consent Act, which the committee has brought before this House for third reading, creates a clear obligation on health care practitioners to abide by the guidelines established by their governing bodies concerning the provision of rights information to their patients. This provision illustrates the government's commitment to the principle of informed consent and personal rights and recognizes also the need for clinical concerns to be borne in mind in the handling of each particular case.

I might say it was a subject on which the minister specifically invited the committee's recommendations when he addressed the committee on February 5 and which received a considerable degree of attention during the committee process. I am pleased to note also that the provision which ultimately emerged from the committee was passed with the concurrence of both the government members and, I believe, the Liberal Party members on the committee.

Rights advice, by the way, will continue to be provided to inpatients of psychiatric facilities governed by the Mental Health Act. To respond to concerns we heard during the public hearings regarding potential conflict of interest, Bill 19 makes the appropriate amendment to that act to ensure that the person who is relied on to provide rights advice to a patient under that act shall be a person other than one who is directly involved in the provision of clinical care to that patient.

I've commented on the subject of the handling of rights advice as the first of the important changes made

as a result of the new legislation. Second, I'm pleased to report that the new act puts more trust and power in the hands of families and friends in making decisions on behalf of their incapable relatives and loved ones. It gives family members much clearer and simpler rules for establishing legal authority to make decisions for their incapable loved ones without the obstructive and time-consuming interference of the state. No longer will family members be expected to make formal statements or sign an official form or undergo any sort of bureaucratic formality confirming their authority to make decisions for their incapable loved ones. As so many people pleaded with us to do, we have made it clear that the state is the decision-maker of last resort only.

Third, we have provided further clarification of the definition of "treatment" in the act by excluding things like examinations and simple diagnostics. These changes will help to ensure that incapable people will get the prompt, effective care and attention they need without having to be subjected to the formal processes of the act for procedures carrying little or no risk.

Fourth, health care professionals will no longer be required to seek repeated consent from a substitute decision-maker in order to make minor adjustments to a treatment program for an incapable person. This is a significant improvement from the current situation, which proved to be confusing, intimidating and frustrating to health care professionals, front-line care providers and family members who wanted most of all to provide the required care to those who needed it.

Lastly, besides these improvements, we've also introduced two new additions to the consent framework: a more workable process for admitting an incapable person into a long-term-care facility, and a process for dealing with decisions about personal assistance services for incapable people that might arise in such facilities or in community care settings.

At the same time, we have preserved and in some cases strengthened that which was good in the legislation of the previous government. The new act will continue to require that a person's own wishes, such as those expressed in a living will or other advance directive, will be honoured. Unique provisions are preserved and improved to allow for special instructions to be given by those who experience cycles of competence and incompetence.

In preserving, expanding and improving the fundamental principles of the previous legislation in the form of the Health Care Consent Act, in this new bill, in the manner in which I have summarized this afternoon, some of our most vulnerable citizens and their families will now have the benefit of a recognized process for obtaining consent, which is when such consent is required. Family members will not need to go through the costly, bureaucratic, time-consuming and frankly pointless exercise of applying for formal guardianship.

We are proud of this new legislation. We believe it now enjoys wide support among health care professionals, health care providers, families and the general public. Certainly, that's my own view after three weeks of full and open public hearings on the matter, in which

I participated as a member of the standing committee on administration of justice.

In short, the Health Care Consent Act recognizes the inherent trust that people of this province have for their health care providers; it strengthens the role of the family; it eliminates needless delays in the treatment and care of incapable people; and it provides further protection to vulnerable people by expanding the treatment consent framework to long-care admissions and to personal assistance services.

As I said earlier, the Health Care Consent Act simplifies and streamlines the existing consent laws. Overall, I suggest that it provides a better balance between individual rights and the need for timely and effective care and treatment.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments? Seeing none, further debate?

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): Because of the lateness of the hour, I'd just like to make a couple of comments and allow the two critics in the opposition parties who have been carrying this bill, the member for Oriole and the member for London Centre, the remaining time.

As other colleagues from all parties, I think February was a very valuable month spent in travelling and in the public hearings and listening to the people of Ontario and what they had to say about this Bill 19. The amount of interest, the energy and the enthusiasm that people put in to give any input to us have surprised me, quite frankly. I must say in some of these matters the government listened. There were other opposition amendments, though, that did not get passed, and we would hope that at a later date they will do that.

The main thing I would want to say is that from our side we feel very sorry that the government has decided to repeal the Advocacy Act, which means to dismantle the Advocacy Commission, without putting in some sort of replacement.

It's very important that we do have advocacy in Ontario. It's very sort of Pollyannian for the government to believe that it's in a perfect world and that family and friends can take care of all the advocacy it needs of the people of Ontario. I wish that were the case, but I'm afraid we heard too many examples of where there needs to be some sort of structure to provide advocacy.

I think there are some criteria that the government needs to understand need to be there for that. It's very important that we have a coordinated effort, it's very important that there be training for the people who provide the advocacy, and also, in the end, that there's accountability. It's very important that Ontarians can be assured that where family and friends, for whatever reason, are unable to provide or incapable of providing the proper advocacy work for relatives and friends, there is some structure there. I would call upon the government to bring that in.

One area that also is missing, the last thing I'd like to say about this bill, is that I've very concerned that there isn't mandatory rights advice in the Consent to Treatment Act. I think it's very important that if somebody is declared incapable, they are informed in the appropriate time that they have the right to appeal that decision and

that they can go before the Consent and Capacity Board with a request for an appeal. I think it's extremely important that people know that right, because it does say in the bill that if the health care practitioner is to proceed with a treatment but knows that the patient who's been deemed to be incapable may appeal to the board, then treatment cannot proceed. Therefore, I think it would be important that the person know they have that right to appeal.

I would ask the government to look at those and that when it does bring in, I hope, some sort of advocacy legislation in the coming years of its term, it also look at that.

1720

Mrs Boyd: We've talked a great deal about the experience that we had for the four weeks where we were hearing presentations and going through clause-by-clause on this act. It sometimes feels to us on this side of the House that we must have been in a different room than our colleagues across the way, because indeed we heard again and again from people how important a safeguard the Advocacy Act was for all of the provisions in the Substitute Decisions Act and the Health Care Consent Act. We heard how important it was to people who are vulnerable—not the people who have power over those who are vulnerable, not the health care professionals, not the hospital administrators, not the family and friends, those who are in a position of power when someone is vulnerable and has been deemed to be incapable—from the vulnerable themselves.

We heard, for example, from the people who are doing advocacy on behalf of the Ministry of Community and Social Services for the developmentally delayed, the advocates in the ministry. I would like to read from their presentation:

"The Consent to Treatment Act and Substitute Decisions Act were passed unanimously in December of 1992"—and let's remember that, unanimously in 1992—"with a safeguard in place for the vulnerable people whose lives would be affected. This safeguard was the Advocacy Act. It can be reasonably assumed that if the Advocacy Act had not been a part of the package with the Substitute Decisions Act and the Consent to Treatment Act, the government would have been under extreme pressure to not pass these two bills in isolation."

I want to say in this place and make sure it's on the record that our government at that time would not have considered putting the Substitute Decisions Act and the Consent to Treatment Act in place without the protections offered by the Advocacy Act.

One of the realities about the need for the Advocacy Act is represented by this document that was tabled with our committee. This is a compendium of inquest results, inquest recommendations. We heard about Father Sean O'Sullivan earlier. Father Sean O'Sullivan got the task of looking at this whole issue because of inquest reports that were saying people had died. People had died at the hands of their caregivers. People had died as a result of a lack of advocacy on their part. It was the real horrors of what happens to vulnerable people when they are not fortunate enough to have a loving family or supportive friends that are really the issue here in this whole matter.

Without the Advocacy Act there was one possibility, just one possibility, that in fact the rights of the vulnerable might be protected. That would have been if the government had heeded the pleas, repeated again and again, of those who came in front of us to at least require that rights advice be given to someone, to require that a person who is deemed to be incapable of making their own decisions would be told that they'd been deemed incapable of making those decisions, would be told what the avenue of appeal would be, would be made aware of the due process that could protect them from those who might wish to make decisions they would not have chosen.

Again and again we pleaded with government members to require health care professionals, to require substitute decision-makers to inform the incapable person that they had been found incapable. Again and again the government said no. They said no because of a very powerful lobby, and I would suggest that lobby came largely from physicians. We heard the OMA and the College of Physicians and Surgeons make impassioned appeals about how it would destroy their relationship with their patients if they had to give their patients the information about being incapable and the information about their right to appeal. We heard equally strong comments from those who work under the Mental Health Act who said that in fact the requirement under the Mental Health Act that they tell people they're incapable and that they tell them the means of appeal formed a stronger bond between them and their patients.

What we have is a situation where this government listened to those powerful physicians who did not believe that their patients ought to be told that they'd been found incapable, who did not want to do that task, had objected to having independent rights advisers do that task and who wanted basically to do whatever they wanted, without any checks or balances, and this government gave them their way.

This government put into the act an amendment, which carried—and I may say my Liberal friends allowed it to carry as well—saying: "The health practitioner shall, in the circumstances and manner specified in guidelines established by the governing body of the health practitioner's profession, provide to persons found by the health practitioner to be incapable with respect to treatment such information about the consequences of the findings as are specified in the guidelines." In other words, physicians, nurses, all of the registered health professions, were given the opportunity to simply make a decision among themselves what, if any, information is to be given to an incapable person and how that information would be conveyed.

There are many who have accused me of being anti-physician or anti-health-care-provider when I suggest to you that none of this legislation would have begun, none of the reports would have been necessary, had the health care professionals been appropriate in the first place. First of all, we're going to see them go away and come up with guidelines. There's nothing to say the government has to approve those guidelines; they simply will go away and do it themselves. Then we're to trust that the colleges will discipline those who do not follow the guidelines.

Who is going to object? How are they going to know about the right to object? They won't have rights advice. These are vulnerable people who are incapable. How are they going to complain about the process?

What's more, we know how slowly grinds the scale of justice at the College of Physicians and Surgeons. One of the most despicable cases for vulnerable people in this province was at the Christopher Robin care home. The Christopher Robin situation took place years ago. There was an inquest result and the College of Physicians and Surgeons was to take disciplinary action against those who were implicated in that matter. They still have not done so, and those children have been dead literally for years. So I think when this government self-satisfiedly says that they're protecting the vulnerable, they patently are not, and it's very clear.

Let me just go through a few of the other things that happened during the course of our deliberations and straighten out the record a little bit.

Bill 19 removes the safeguards in the Substitute Decisions Act that prevented abuse in conflict-of-interest situations. This government's amendments will allow service providers to become the guardians of an incapable person's property, and that is not appropriate. It removes the requirement that someone be screened prior to becoming a guardian and allows any person who has stated an intention to make an application for guardianship to have access to people's private records, including their medical records.

It removes the requirements that guardians of property make regular financial statements, which would have prevented the abuse of an incapable person's property.

Bill 19 no longer prohibits substitute decision-makers from consenting on an incapable person's behalf to the use of electric shock or cattle prods as aversive treatment—a very backward step and one that both opposition parties tried to at least get them to limit to some extent because of the possibility of abuse. An overwhelming number of witnesses suggested that the practice be at least limited by the Consent and Capacity Board or by the court prior to being allowed in this province.

I must say that in the Health Care Consent Act there are some real concerns as well. One of the major issues that was raised with us was the section of the act, part I, section 2, under the plan of treatment—and it's on page 66 of the original act—which said it "provides for the administration to the person of various treatments or courses of treatment and may, in addition, provide for the withholding or withdrawal of treatment in light of the person's current health condition."

1730

I'm reading to you again from the protective service workers' brief: "This new act does nothing to protect developmentally challenged individuals from 'do not resuscitate' orders. In the new legislation, there is no definition of 'current health condition.' Is cerebral palsy a health condition? Is Down syndrome a health condition? If an individual has more than one diagnosis, including the condition of severe developmental handicap, does this indicate that the current health condition would be seen as worse than a person who is not severely handicapped? Are we opening the door to allowing

euthanasia of vulnerable citizens who may be defined as not having the same value as others?"

That went on and on. We heard testimony from someone in London representing PUSH of southwestern Ontario that in fact the experience has been that people are routinely asked for "do not resuscitate" orders when they have other physical disabilities. We urged the government to try to come to grips with some way to prevent this very prejudicial treatment of people who are most vulnerable, and they did not.

We are saying to the vulnerable in this province that although this government had the capacity and had the opportunity to provide that kind of support and care, it did not.

Bill 19 removes all references to rights advisers and eliminates the requirement that rights advice be provided to a person found to be incapable. Witness after witness came before the committee and explained to the committee why the provision of rights advice is so very essential to the vulnerable. We listened to many witnesses who called on the government to reconsider its position and we also urged the government, if they were not prepared to have independent rights advisers, to make sure that the health professionals who were making the determination were forced to do that.

The Tories also removed the principles that were set out in the original bill. Again, the Tories ignored the recommendations of an inquest, a very recent inquest, an inquest that concluded while we were sitting. The Lonnie Clemens inquest jury recommendations suggested that the principles contained in the original bill be retained in the new legislation. These principles were deleted and those principles were that the right of the individual to make decisions should be respected to the greatest extent possible and that supportive family and friends and advocates should be available to support individuals in making their own decisions. In spite of an impassioned plea from Lonnie Clemens's parents and having in front of them the very recent recommendations of that inquest jury, this government did not respond positively.

We also heard out of that inquest and out of many of the proposals the need for the training of evaluators, capacity assessors and health professionals in the whole issue of assessing whether or not someone is capable. The government voted down amendment after amendment that would have required the various colleges of health professionals to provide that kind of education and training, even though the inquest recommendations pointed very clearly to the fact that Lonnie Clemens is dead largely because those health professionals involved had not been aware of all the issues around capacity assessment and around the whole issue of health consent.

We heard from witnesses like Judith Wahl of the Advocacy Centre for the Elderly that the government consider amendments which would require consent to all variations and adjustments to treatment. We tabled an amendment that would be that presumption to those treatments that the health practitioner advised were probable at the time of the original consent. We did that because of the fear of those who were vulnerable that their medications, their treatments, even their very setting

might be changed without their consent. The government voted down those amendments.

Many witnesses said there had to be an amendment to provide that every effort was made to find an interpreter where communications issues arose, where the people were not able to communicate because of language or because of disability. It would have included such things as sign language, such things as the Bliss board and other ways of communicating. We introduced an amendment to this effect, and the government voted that amendment down.

The government made significant changes to the makeup of the Consent and Capacity Board. They are now allowing a one-person board to make a decision that affects the rest of a person's life. I suggest to you that this is one of the most serious matters in terms of the representations that we heard in front of the committee. The government's excuse is that it's difficult to get a board together in remote areas. All we are saying is, if it's difficult, then it's all the more important that that board be seen to be as arm's length and as unprejudiced as possible, and that confidence is not there among the disabled in this province.

As we went through this week, I think those of us who have worked with the disabled, who are close to disabled people, were often almost reduced to tears by the dignity and the clarity with which vulnerable people appearing in front of us expressed their vulnerability and begged government members to reconsider some of the actions being taken by this government.

It will be our job as opposition, unfortunately, to ask the questions and point out the tragedies that occur as a result of the foolish repeal of the Advocacy Act and the changes that are going to happen as a result of no rights advice being given to patients. It is going to be our job, I think, to continue to work with all groups of vulnerable people to ensure that those who are capable of giving a power of attorney at least are able to do so. It became very clear that further education is required among the general population, because the general population sees everybody else as vulnerable and forgets that all of us, as we age, become vulnerable, in addition to being vulnerable always to unexpected incidents. That will need to happen.

That will do nothing for those who are incapable of making a power of attorney. It will do nothing for the most vulnerable, who are now to be subjected, without any kind of check or balance, to the decisions of those who can make those decisions under this act.

The government has made clear that substitute decision-makers and health care professionals who act according to this act will be safe from any liability. So if we see the tragedies of the past, tragedies that have happened very often in care facilities—tragedies like the disastrous insulin therapy that destroyed the minds of many individuals in the past, tragedies like the excessive use of electroshock therapy, which destroyed the ability of people to be independent and thinking human beings in the past, the kinds of aversive behavioural modification treatments that were routinely used in our developmental handicapped facilities that, as we heard and have

always heard from people first, have destroyed people's lives and their ability to be independent—those treatments were advocated on behalf of or by health care professionals. They were treatments that were considered by health care professionals to be helpful at the time, and they are treatments that have proven over time to be very harmful.

I suggest to you that we will find again that many treatments will be allowed without any kind of recourse, under this act, to people who have no voice of their own because they are incapable right now of making a power of attorney form. That's where the tragedy lies. They are the most vulnerable in our province.

1740

We have argued long and hard and we have pointed out to the Conservatives that they were part of the decision to put the act in place in the first place. We think it is a tragedy that this government has decided to listen to the words of those who are powerful and strong over those who are weak and vulnerable yet again. It is typical of the way this government operates. It constantly listens only to those who speak in a language that they are used to hearing, the language of power and privilege, and that has happened again.

The vast majority of the presentations that were made to our committee urged this government to retain protections that they very, very clearly were not prepared to think were important. Again and again we heard members of the committee say \$18 million is too much to protect the rights of the most vulnerable. I would suggest to you that no amount of money is enough to protect the rights of the vulnerable, that these inquest results that were presented to us as a committee tell us that there are problems in our system and that we, as people who are making the laws of this province, are responsible for ensuring the safety and the health of vulnerable people.

This government has failed to do that despite all the efforts of the opposition parties. I hope you are ashamed as you pass this act, because you will find that there are many, many people in this province who will suffer as a result.

Mrs Caplan: As I rise to participate in this debate, I'd like to thank and congratulate the members of our caucus who participated and did I think excellent committee work.

I think Bill 19, about which most people would wonder, "What is this all about?" even listening to this debate and hearing so many diverse issues, is really three bills. The former government brought in those three bills and they were separate bills. There was the bill that dealt with the establishment of advocacy in Ontario, there was a bill that developed substitute decision legislation, and a bill for consent to treatment in health care. Those were three distinct bills.

Our caucus and our party supported the substitute decision legislation. It contains very clearly two distinct concepts. One is the new ability to have a power of attorney for personal care. It adds to the existing power of attorney for financial care, for financial and property decisions. What that is effectively is that someone, while

they are able and capable, decides who will decide when they are incapable and unable to make decisions for themselves. We supported that; we support that today.

There have been very significant amendments to the substitute decision legislation. Frankly, I said at committee, I said at the time when the act was originally passed in this House, that while it was supportable, it was not perfect, and I would suggest to you that the substitute decision legislation still likely is not perfect. I think many of the technical amendments and some of the amendments that have been brought forward build upon the legislation that was brought forward by the New Democrats, and I believe it is supportable today, while not perfect.

I think we will continue to see changes to the substitute decision legislation over time, because that act is extremely important. Not only does it set out the regime for powers of attorney for both personal care and financial and property, but it also sets out the regime for guardianship. I don't think people realize that what guardianship means is that your life is taken over. It is very important that we know and understand what those roles are, that we know what the role of the public guardian and trustee is, and I don't think there was sufficient opportunity for us to fully understand the implications of guardianship in the province of Ontario, because with the substitute decision legislation you are either capable or incapable, and when deemed incapable, you lose all of your rights.

I would urge everyone in this province to make out a power of attorney, to be very clear about deciding who they wish to make decisions for them when they are unable, and to give advance directive to those who will be making decisions on their behalf. These are difficult issues. We usually don't like to talk about them. But one reason I had always hoped, when the government moved to make changes to the substitute decisions legislation, that it would be separate legislation was so these issues could be fully canvassed.

I think we missed an opportunity when we dealt with Bill 19, because the government did not have the kind of consultation that I believe would have been appropriate. At committee, we asked the question over and over again, "Were you consulted?" I have to tell you that, with rare exception, we were told no, there had not been any consultation.

I believe if there had been consultation, many of the problems that exist in Bill 19 and many of the problems that were identified by those who came before the committee could have been resolved. Many of the amendments the government brought forward changed a word, and that was simply a result of the fact that the government had not consulted. This is very significant and important legislation, and I think the government missed an opportunity to have even better legislation, because it did not involve any one in the drafting of Bill 19, did not share the proposals it was bringing forward, because it determined it knew what it was going to do in advance. It's always a shame when you make that assumption, because part of the importance of the legislative process is the valuable input that can come.

The second piece of legislation is the consent to treatment legislation, a piece of legislation that I lived and breathed for a long time. I will say that I think the existing legislation today under Bill 19, the changes to the consent to treatment legislation, are a significant improvement over the consent to treatment legislation brought forward by the previous government.

The last piece of legislation is the advocacy piece. As members of this House will know, we voted against that legislation as we voted against the consent to treatment legislation when it was brought forward by the New Democrats.

If there was ever an example of the differences between the three parties, the approach to Bill 19 and the very important issues is a good example of how we differ. We said very clearly that we would scrap the Advocacy Commission as it had been constituted by the NDP, that we would make changes to the consent to treatment legislation, because the combination of those two pieces of legislation were unnecessarily bureaucratic, unnecessarily intrusive and created a climate that, frankly, was unnecessarily adversarial.

What we had in response to the NDP approach to consent to treatment and advocacy was an environment where people were not obeying the law. No enforcement model or mechanism was going to change that, because providers and those with an interest in this legislation, in consent legislation and advocacy legislation, had been so polarized—and I think “polarized” is the right word—by the process of the previous government’s legislation that when Dr Peter Singer came before the committee, he said very clearly that it would take some time to heal. I have to tell you, I think that healing is important. I am concerned, because vulnerable people are left vulnerable in an environment where professionals, where advocates are at each other’s throats.

If there was ever an example of the approach of three parties and how we differ, our approach to advocacy and consent to treatment is probably a very good example. The governing party, the Conservative Party of Mike Harris, believes there is no role for government, that advocacy and rights advice should be left entirely to friends, families and well-meaning providers. The NDP believes that friends, family and providers should not be trusted and that there is a requirement that government do it all for you. Within the NDP model that polarization, those tensions and anxieties were heightened, and ultimately, I believe, the most vulnerable suffered. The cost of the system that they put in place was going to be in the neighbourhood of \$80 million to \$120 million to provide the kind of mandatory rights advice that the Consent to Treatment Act contemplated. That was on top of the \$18 million for advocacy.

1750

Now, we’ve heard a lot of rhetoric in this House. The reality is that our party believes there is a role for government. We believe there is an opportunity for consensus. We recognize that this consensus does not mean unanimity. We recognize that people require support and that kind of support should be enshrined in legislation. While we said very clearly that we would

scrap the Advocacy Commission as it had been constituted by the New Democrats, we made very clear our support for advocacy and for legislated advocacy. For anyone in this House to speak the words of Sean O’Sullivan, to read from his report, and to not support legislated advocacy is a misrepresentation of what that report said.

This legislation that is before us with three parts—substitute decisions, which was supported by all three parties; consent to treatment; and advocacy, which our party had serious concerns about—we believe today is an improvement. At the end of the day we have to say: Is what is proposed by this government significantly better than what is in place today? And the answer to that is yes, notwithstanding the fact that this legislation has flaws, very serious flaws. We believe people have a right to know when they have been declared incapable by a provider, whether that provider is in the position of an evaluator or an assessor. People have a right to know, and this legislation does not guarantee them that right.

We believe that there should be an obligation on the part of the provider to inform an individual and to inform them of their right to appeal, and while we believe that it should be up to the professional colleges to determine the guidelines, we believe the legislation should be explicit about how the colleges should proceed to establish those guidelines in some consistent manner.

We believe in self-governance. We believe that colleges have the obligation and the responsibility to do it, but we believe that the legislation should reflect that and that that’s a glaring error in this legislation.

We believe that education is extremely important, and there is no education mandate given in this legislation.

We will be waiting to see what the government will do to replace advocacy as they repeal the advocacy legislation, and we will be watching very carefully to see what the implications are and what the results are. Unfortunately, it will likely be through coroners’ inquests that we will see whether or not their approach is working. My colleague—and I acknowledge the important work that she did on committee and I do not question the desire of the New Democrats when they brought forward their legislation to develop what they believed was an appropriate form of advocacy.

While I do not question their motives, as I said before, even when all three parties will agree, we will differ on our approach. I did not support their approach and I believe that because of the failure of their approach we have seen the pendulum swing to the point where the Conservatives will be successful and have public support for complete repeal. I do believe that they’d better come up with something that will respond to what is a serious issue, that is, the needs of vulnerable people. I see the minister saying, “We will,” and we will hold you to that, Minister. We all know there is a problem and we know it cannot be left to the well-meaning, because we know of child abuse, we know of elder abuse, and case after case has been identified in coroners’ inquests of people who have died simply because they did not have anyone to advocate on their behalf.

However, I would say to my colleague that the Clemens family, the parents of Lonnie Clemens, sup-

ported the changes to this legislation because they believe the poisoned environment of the previous legislation led to the confusion that meant their son did not receive the treatment he should have received. They and others want that poisoned environment ended; they want it to heal.

As we arrive at the end of this debate with a lot of soul-searching, with a lot of thought, we have determined in this caucus that Bill 19, while it is flawed, will put in place a regime that is a significant improvement and will allow for that healing, and if we did not support Bill 19, we would be saying that what exists is better than what is proposed.

We will be watching very carefully and we will be waiting for the minister to bring forward the government's approach to advocacy. We hope they will change

their mind and that it will be legislated. We will be watching very carefully and proposing future changes because we think that will be appropriate and it will be forthcoming. But it is the intention of the Liberal caucus to support Bill 19 on third reading.

Mr David Turnbull (York Mills): Mr Speaker, I believe we have unanimous consent to defer a vote on this until just before routine proceedings tomorrow.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Is unanimous consent given: tomorrow afternoon before routine proceedings? Agreed.

It being almost 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1758.

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No. 47

N° 47

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Tuesday 26 March 1996

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Mardi 26 mars 1996



Speaker
Honourable Allan K. McLean

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Président
L'honorable Allan K. McLean

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 26 March 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 26 mars 1996

*The House met at 1332.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ANDEANA ZENHA

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Never has a father's love been more apparent, and unless you have experienced—as have the members for Parry Sound, Algoma and Brant-Haldimand—the loss of a loved one, you cannot appreciate the love of a father.

I speak today on Mr Zenha's behalf. Joe's vigil is over. Mr Zenha doesn't know who changed their mind. Mr Zenha doesn't know why there was a change of mind. What Mr Zenha does know is that the decision made is a first major step in Andeana's recovery. She and her mother will fly to Texas immediately, where treatment will begin, providing the 17-year-old with a new lease on life.

Joe has asked that I thank publicly all those in this House who effected this decision. Joe wants me as well to thank the people of Sudbury and to thank the people of Ontario for their massive show of support through letters, prayers, money, faxes and in many, many different ways. Finally, Joe wants me to tell the House that often the best solutions are achieved when legislators drop their ideological differences and work together for what is right.

HEALTH CARE

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): On Monday morning of this week, I attended a meeting in Sault Ste Marie and a press conference of health professionals and consumers to defend the right of workers to have a say in how their workplace changes and how the services they deliver get restructured and to raise a red flag regarding the cuts to health care implemented and expected by this government.

Jobs and services are under attack in an unprecedented way across the province as the Harris agenda unfolds. Sault Ste Marie is very vulnerable and in double jeopardy in any exercise of major downsizing in the public sector. Jobs we lose are very difficult to replace, and it's not just a matter of a short drive down the road once we lose a service. As it relates to our health care and, most particularly, our hospitals in Sault Ste Marie, we have done the work, we have streamlined. Any further cuts will most certainly mean a reduction in both the amount and the quality of service.

I will not stand by and watch services move to Sudbury or Toronto, places experiencing their own cutbacks.

I will not support contracting out that sees jobs and money leave my community. I understand the difficult challenge faced by the boards and administration of our now, for all intents and purposes, one hospital; however, I do not think we should simply be compliant. We have to fight back. Quality of services, indeed quality of life and the very viability of our community are at risk here.

I have people calling me and coming to my office telling me stories of their disappointment, frustration and pain as they and their loved ones try to access the medical—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member's time has expired.

RAYMOND DRISCOLL

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I stand to mark the passing of a wonderful citizen, Mr Raymond T. Driscoll of Otonabee township near Peterborough. Ray served his country, his community and his family. He served in the navy during the Second World War, was elected as school trustee, hospital board member and reeve for many years. In his untimely death, Ray leaves behind his wife, Lillian, and children, Julie, Daniel, Richard, Jane, Jill and Joann. Raymond T. Driscoll was my uncle and a lifelong role model for me and others in the community. I trust all members of this Legislature will join with me and extend our thanks to people like Ray Driscoll who serve their community with distinction.

ECONOMIC POLICY

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I have a lot of questions.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): Oh, oh.

Mr Duncan: "Oh, oh" is right.

What do you call it when you adopt the failed policies of the Republican Party and Newt Gingrich? What do you call it when you brand all of those who disagree with you as special interests? What do you call it when you cry about a debt load and then proceed to borrow \$5 billion for a tax cut? What do you call it when you bring in a tax cut and then introduce massive new user fees, cut public education and close hospitals? What do you call a job creation plan that involves getting rid of teachers and firing 20,000 civil servants? What do you call it when you label environmental safeguards as useless red tape? What do you call it when your idea of getting tough on crime means reducing the number of police officers?

The answer to all of these questions is one word: Mikeonomics. It's been tried in many places and many times. However, the lessons of history are something that Mikeonomics has chosen to ignore. This should come as no surprise because Mike Harris himself once said, "Too

much knowledge is a dangerous thing." This statement is a good illustration of the intellectual roots of Mikeonomics, which are the same as those of weather forecasting: rarely accurate, devoid of memory and therefore cheerful about being wrong. As Ontario prepares itself for this bellyful of Mikeonomics, fasten your seatbelts; it won't be pleasant.

NORTHERN HEALTH SERVICES

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): Yesterday we witnessed an unbelievable spectacle: the Premier of the province telling people that his cuts to hospitals, to schools, to communities and to law enforcement have nothing to do with the tax break he is giving to the wealthiest people of the province. The Premier obviously thinks that the people of Ontario can't add and subtract. Let me give the Premier a little arithmetic lesson so he will understand what people in community after community have already figured out.

The budget of the hospital corporation in my constituency has been cut by almost \$600,000. The hospital corporation runs a hospital in the town of Fort Frances, one in the village of Emo and one in the village of Rainy River. The hospital corporation knows it will face further cuts of \$600,000 next year and another \$600,000 the year after that, for a total reduction of \$1.8 million over three years. The two small rural hospitals have annual budgets of about \$1.5 million per year each.

The board of directors of the hospital corporation is faced with the unsavoury option of closing one of the small rural hospitals because the Premier and the Minister of Health have cut the budgets. The Premier may not be able to figure it out, but the people who live in the small communities of Emo and Rainy River understand that their hospital will be closed and they understand at the same time that while their budget is being cut, the Premier is going to make money available for the wealthiest people in Ontario.

1340

EDUCATION REFORM

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich): Last Thursday I had the opportunity to travel to Waterloo to discuss education with students from Waterloo Collegiate high school.

Organizers of the debate were disappointed to have to leave an empty chair on the stage for the length of the debate. That empty chair was set for none other than the invisible minister, Elizabeth Witmer, whose riding incidentally we were in that evening. Stranger still was that Minister Witmer couldn't get a Tory member to replace her. I ask, where was the member for the riding of Kitchener, where was the member for Kitchener-Wilmot? How disappointing, given that John Sweeney, also from Kitchener-Wilmot, has shown such leadership in the area of education reform.

When Minister Snobelen released his toolkit—or as the director for the Waterloo region separate school board calls it, toy kit—the former chairwoman of the Kitchener board of education, Elizabeth Witmer, was on the phone to her riding at 7 am, apologizing for the government.

Yes, even the minister knew the toolkit was useless. She told her people she was trying to make Minister Snobelen understand, but she had failed. Yes, Minister Witmer knows those cuts will affect the classroom.

To the minister from Waterloo we say, "I'm sorry" isn't good enough. Those of us who looked at an empty chair all night think the Conservative members from the Waterloo region did an enormous disservice to their community.

LAND USE PLANNING

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I just came from a mock funeral attended by environmental and housing advocates from across Ontario. We were mourning the loss of affordable housing, apartments in houses, public transit, wetlands and woodlands, biological diversity, specialty crop lands, clean groundwater and public transportation in the planning process. Today, Bill 20, the Tories' new, regressive Planning Act comes a step closer to law.

Over 23,000 people from across Ontario were involved in a four-year process to reform planning in Ontario under the NDP government. A delicate, difficult balance was formed between development and environmental protection interests. Now, in just a few short months, years of reform and public consultation are out the window.

We now have a bill which was written for developers mostly by developers. Mike Harris is sacrificing the environment for profits for his pals. Bill 20 will mean open season for land developers on wetlands, ravines and significant natural features.

I say to this government, they are going to see down the road what a huge mistake they're making, because there are going to be more appeals to the OMB. The laws are now so unclear that people won't know which way is which, and I say, shame on the Minister of Environment and Energy for not getting more involved in this process and for signing off on such a regressive bill.

MARIPOSA SCHOOL OF SKATING

Mr Joseph N. Tascona (Simcoe Centre): Over the weekend, thousands of people across the country and around the world were glued to their television sets watching the 1996 World Figure Skating Championships from Edmonton.

I am pleased that my riding of Simcoe Centre was able to play a part in this spectacular sporting event. Barrie is very fortunate to be home to the Mariposa School of Skating, which has produced world champions Brian Orser and Elvis Stojko. This year, Mariposa sent six national seniors champions to compete for a world title.

Elvis Stojko, Jennifer Robinson and the pairs team of Michelle Menzies and Jean-Michel Bombardier did a fine job for Canada. Across the Atlantic, fans also cheered for Steven Cousins and Markus Leminen, the men's champions from Great Britain and Finland. Both of these athletes train in Barrie.

Not only does Mariposa attract skaters from around the globe, but it encourages the ethics of sportsmanship and hard work among all its athletes. Whether they always

bring home a medal, and Mariposa has won many, the people of Simcoe Centre can tell you that, both on and off the ice, the skaters of Mariposa are always first class.

ORAL QUESTIONS

HYDRO RATES

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): My first question is for the Minister of Environment and Energy. Minister, you will be aware that last September Ontario Hydro issued a discussion paper entitled Competition, Customer Choice and Convergence: A New Structure for Ontario's Electricity Industry. That paper concluded that a total privatization of Ontario Hydro would cause electricity rates to rise by as much as 32%. Lo and behold, when that paper was submitted in January to the provincial commission studying the future of Ontario's electricity system, all references to rate increases caused by privatization had simply disappeared. Minister, what changed between September and January?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Environment and Energy): I thank the Leader of the Opposition for the question. Right now Ontario Hydro is facing some competitive challenges. We have had a number of rate increases over the years. The government has taken its first step in trying to meet those challenges by introducing a rate freeze over five years. In addition to that, we have established the Macdonald commission to look at the competitive issues facing Ontario Hydro, and it is due to report to me at the end of next month. It's my understanding that this commission, in travelling across the province and receiving submissions from a number of groups, has in fact received over 200 submissions.

The member asks me specific information about one of those, that it may have changed from the fall until the time it was submitted. I would say, in response to that, that in meeting with people from the very time I became minister until presently, many of them have come forward with a number of different ideas that changed regularly as they have listened to other ideas being put forward by people with regard to rates. I don't think anyone in the entire world has a definitive answer on what would happen with rates in any situation of change.

Mrs McLeod: I am absolutely amazed that the Minister of Environment and Energy has just referred to the Ontario Hydro management report on what would happen in privatization to hydro rates as "a submission" which could then be changed and altered as different views were heard. Presumably, Ontario Hydro had evidence behind the report that it made public in September that showed hydro rate increases of as much as 32%. Presumably, there was some reason why those estimates disappeared when the report was made by Hydro to the Macdonald commission studying privatization.

The minister will be well aware that in that presentation to the Macdonald commission Ontario Hydro's president, Al Kupcis, said he didn't know, he had no idea, what impact privatization would have on hydro rates.

Minister, I ask you, what prompted you and Hydro officials to back away from the conclusion that they came

to in September that privatization would increase rates by up to 32%? While you're at it, don't you think it's irresponsible for Hydro management to make a statement that they have no idea what would happen to rates under privatization?

Hon Mrs Elliott: With all due respect, when someone comes before the Macdonald commission with a report, it is not my report, it is the report of the presenter. It is up to them to put into that submission what they feel is appropriate. This was in fact, if you're referring to Ontario Hydro's report, their report. They are entitled to put in it whatever they choose. I would remind my colleagues that we are about to make changes to Ontario Hydro, so we are the recipient of advice and ideas.

Mrs McLeod: I would, with all due respect, suggest to you, Minister, that there is one real reason behind the change in the report that Hydro put out in September and the report that it made to the Macdonald commission, and that one change was a political appointment, the responsibility of your government and your Premier, and it was the appointment of Mr Bill Farlinger, the Premier's friend and a clear promoter of Hydro privatization as the chair of Ontario Hydro.

1350

Minister, you were quoted last week as saying that the government had not made a commitment to privatize Hydro. But last week Mr Farlinger told the Canadian Club, despite the fact you've got a commission studying it, supposedly independently, "We have to break Hydro up so that we have competition in generation, and that inevitably will involve some privatization."

I suggest to you it is only too clear that you are not prepared to talk about rate increases because the Premier and his friend want to privatize Hydro at any cost for ideological reasons, and damn the impact on the ratepayer.

Minister, will you make public all the information that was used by Hydro last September to conclude that privatization would cause Hydro rates to rise by as much as 32%?

Hon Mrs Elliott: Within Ontario Hydro itself, we have the Power Workers' Union with one opinion, we have the society members with another opinion, we have the managers with another opinion and we have the chairman with yet another opinion. I would put to you that there are hundreds of opinions in this province as to how to go forward with Ontario Hydro.

My commitment, and the commitment of this government, to the people of Ontario is to reform Ontario Hydro with three things in mind: achieving the lowest rates and achieving reliable power and safe power for the people of this province.

Mrs McLeod: I wasn't seeking opinion; I was seeking the minister's concurrence to table evidence, the evidence that Hydro used, and I trust that she will see fit to follow up on that request.

AMALGAMATION OF SCHOOL BOARDS

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): I'll place my second question to the Minister of Education and Training. Minister, you indicated last week that some

\$1 billion could be saved in what you term non-classroom spending. You implied with your response that boards should not be in the business of laying off teachers and hurting classroom education, in spite of your budget cuts, if they would just somehow cut administration.

We want you today to be a little more specific about what you think can be cut in what you call non-classroom spending. For example, and again I want you to be specific, of the \$1 billion that you told us last week could be saved, how much do you feel can be saved through the amalgamation of school boards, and when do you think those particular savings will be realized?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): As the Leader of the Opposition knows, we've had a report on the amalgamation of various school boards across the province. The Sweeney commission reported I believe now about a month ago, and I have asked the MPPs to go out and talk with people in their ridings, because I think it's important that we have a lot of input on this issue. They will report back to me by the end of May and we'll consider the input of MPPs from all parties in this chamber.

Mrs McLeod: The problem is that the budget cuts are happening right now. Any plans you might have, whether through amalgamation or otherwise, to find what you call out-of-classroom savings are not going to be implemented for who knows when, if ever, and in the meantime boards are trying to cope with your funding cuts today, they are laying off teachers and that is going to hurt classroom spending.

I think it's reasonable, Minister, to expect you to be more specific about what you think boards can do now to make those cuts without laying off teachers and without hurting classroom education.

I want to give you one specific example, because you did tell MPPs to go out and talk to their local boards. Let me use my local board, the Lakehead Board of Education, as an example. The only amalgamation that's been recommended with that particular board is amalgamation with an unorganized township of Kashabowie, and yet the Lakehead Board of Education is expected to find, I think, at least \$2.5 million in savings to meet your \$1-billion target.

I ask you, Minister, do you expect the Lakehead Board of Education to find some of those savings through this amalgamation, and if not, where do you think the Lakehead Board of Education should find \$2.5 million in administrative savings?

Hon Mr Snobelen: The ministry will be releasing its grant information to the boards across the province in the very near future, so particular boards will know exactly what the grant formula will be for next year in the very near future.

However, I'd like to point out to the Leader of the Opposition that the Sweeney commission report did not talk simply about amalgamation of boards, and that's not something that we've booked savings to. We most certainly would consider changing the governance structure of education if it led to more affordability, more accountability and a higher quality of education in the province. We'd consider those kinds of governance changes.

I would point out to the Leader of the Opposition that the Sweeney commission identified that 47% of spending on education across the province happens outside of the classroom, by that commission's definition, and that the commission suggested that should be lowered to 40%. I think that if the Leader of the Opposition does some mathematics, she'll find that 7% represents almost \$1 billion in savings, so I would recommend to her that she read the report.

Mrs McLeod: I have indeed read the report and I am aware of the total body of recommendations, none of which will be implemented, if this government intends to act on them, in time to stop boards from having to deal with the cuts that will be in the grants announced this week. Those cuts are going to mean teacher layoffs and those cuts are going to mean cuts to classroom education, and this minister refuses to give us any other alternative.

Let me take you back to my specific example, because I want to try to get you past this general statement that you keep making that somehow boards should be able to avoid teacher layoffs by finding this mythical administrative savings cut. The Lakehead board will not find savings from their amalgamation with Kashabowie. You may be aware Kashabowie doesn't have a board of education, it doesn't have any schools, it doesn't have any trustees, it only has three students, and those three students go into school in the Lakehead anyway. That might look like an amalgamation on paper when you point to a list of school boards amalgamated, but they certainly aren't going to find any \$2.5 million of savings there.

There's something else that the minister must know, because in your own ministry documents it very clearly shows that the Lakehead Board of Education in 1995 will be spending 88% of its dollars on what your ministry calls instruction. Only 12% of their education dollars are going to everything else, from business administration to general administration, to plant operation and maintenance, to transportation, to capital expenditures and debt charges, and 88% goes to what the ministry calls instruction. Where do you expect that board to find \$2.5 million in cuts?

Hon Mr Snobelen: As I said a moment ago, I'm sure the Leader of the Opposition will understand that our grants for the school boards have not been released yet. They will be released in the very near future and we'll know what each individual board will have available in terms of grant next year.

However, though I can't talk specifically about the board-by-board basis, I can talk to the Leader of the Opposition and reaffirm for her that Ontario, by almost anyone's measures, spends significantly more than the national average.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member for Windsor-Sandwich is out of order.

Hon Mr Snobelen: I believe, and our government believes, that the local boards of education are committed to delivering education in an affordable way to the taxpayers, parents and students of Ontario. I believe, and I'm sure that if the Leader of the Opposition were to look at the various reports that have been done on this subject,

there is a lot of room to make improvements in the quality of education in Ontario, without affecting that quality, to find a more affordable system. In fact, I believe we must do that for the future of the students of this province, and that's what this government is committed to.

POLICE COMPLAINTS

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question of the Attorney General. It's following up on the question raised by my colleague from London Centre yesterday regarding what we believe may be a compromising of the integrity of the criminal justice system.

The attorney will know that the government agreed to a public inquiry into the events around this place last Monday. The attorney will also know that at the same time five complaints have been laid with the office of the police complaints commissioner. I want to make clear here that the office of the police complaints commissioner is separate and distinct from the public inquiry that the government has agreed to. As you know, it is an ongoing body that at any time members of the public concerned about the conduct of police officers can lay complaints to under part IV of the Police Services Act.

1400

The office of the police complaints commissioner is a system of civilian review of regional, municipal and OPP conduct. In accordance with the act, a final report of the police complaints commission's investigation will be provided to the commissioner of the OPP, who has the responsibility to decide if there should be disciplinary action or indeed if there should be criminal charges laid or some sort of public inquiry into possible criminal activity.

Does the Attorney General agree that there are two separate processes in place here, one specific to the events of March 18 and the other an ongoing investigating office that deals with police conduct in general?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): We are looking at all of those issues as we attempt to draft terms of reference for this inquiry that will be satisfactory to the opposition. Yes, I do acknowledge that the police complaints commission is independent, that the police complaints commission has complaints before it and that the police complaints commission is dealing with those complaints.

Mr Wildman: I'd like to make clear here that since we are dealing with two separate processes, the Ontario Provincial Police commissioner is ultimately responsible for deciding what disciplinary actions, if any, are warranted against OPP officers, indeed if criminal charges could be laid. The commissioner of the OPP, as the attorney is aware, is directly responsible and accountable to the Solicitor General of this province. The Solicitor General has already stated that in his judgement, the police acted appropriately. As a matter of fact, the solicitor may have prejudiced the outcome of any such investigation by the complaints commissioner, and certainly any response to it by the commissioner of the OPP, because the police involved, or their lawyers, I suspect could claim that the Solicitor General has already been quoted as defending their actions.

As the chief law officer of the province, are you not concerned that the Solicitor General's statements could prejudice the investigation—we're not talking here about the public inquiry—and possibly the outcome of the complaints that have been laid before the police complaints commissioner?

Hon Mr Harnick: The office of the police complaints commission investigates independently of the government. The judge who heads that commission will perform that investigation. It's my recollection that what the Solicitor General stated he has always qualified as being those issues he personally observed.

Further, it is important to note that no one has any information about the individual complaints filed, no one knows who filed those complaints, no one knows the nature of those allegations.

Interjections.

Hon Mr Harnick: I appreciate that the opposition asks this question without any intention of listening to the answer, because what they are doing is trying to make one giant stretch that they know they can't make, because those individual investigations that the police complaints commissioner is involved with are known only to the police complaints commissioner. That is the only individual who knows who made the complaints, the facts, the nature of them, and those will be investigated by that independent person.

Mr Wildman: The Attorney General will know clearly that while the investigation by the police complaints commissioner is independent, the results of that investigation go to the commissioner of the OPP, who reports to the Solicitor General of this province.

Since you raised the comments and the sequence of events, perhaps it would be useful to look at the actual quotes. On Tuesday, the Solicitor General was clearly aware—he indicated he was—of complaints being laid before the police complaints commissioner, and yet he said, "At the police complaints commission, there are already, I understand, two complaints that are possibly filed; at least they've been filed with the police service and may be formally filed with the police complaints commission, and perhaps others will follow."

Then on Wednesday, on his way into cabinet, after having had the opportunity to view confidential police videotapes, the Solicitor General stated: "I think they," the picketers, "were given fair warning. I think the tape indicates they were given fair warning and the picket lines broke down. I think there has been a breakdown in control by picket captains. In fact, I understand there were even physical altercations between picket captains along the line. I think it indicates that certainly the warnings were delivered in a variety of fashions, through megaphones, through the tapping of the shields, and those kinds of things occurred."

The Solicitor General was clearly aware that the complaints had been made against the police with the commissioner. He had access to confidential information. As the chief law officer of the crown, aren't you afraid that his comments carry a significant amount of weight in this matter, that they could indeed prejudice the actual investigation as perceived, affecting the outcome of the investigation and how the OPP commissioner might act

on those outcomes? If that is the case, would you not agree that the Solicitor General should at least step aside while these investigations are ongoing to ensure that there is not any—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The question's been asked.

Hon Mr Harnick: First of all, the Solicitor General has nothing to do with these ongoing investigations, and the acting leader of the third party knows that. If we also listen to the remarks of the acting leader of the third party, we know by listening to those remarks that there is not one single thing that he says, not one single thing, that impacts on an individual investigation of private complaints laid before the police complaints commissioner. Not one single thing.

Not only that, but when asked about this—

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): What a joke. Go back to private practice.

Hon Mr Harnick: At least I'll have a private practice to go back to, Mr Cooke.

There is not one single thing that is mentioned that impacts on those individual investigations. There is nothing.

Further, the Solicitor General has made it very clear in this House, when asked about it—and I notice that the opposition is afraid to ask him about it today—that the observations that he made and that he commented on were what he saw. Again, I reiterate that the Solicitor General has absolutely nothing to do with the investigations that will take place.

COMMENTS OF SOLICITOR GENERAL

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): It's very clear that the government is using a double standard around here, and this is a classic case of "That was then and this is now." My question is for the Solicitor General.

Clearly, the response from your Premier yesterday indicates that he doesn't understand the process that's involved in a complaints process. You know very well, Mr Solicitor General, that it's entirely inappropriate for you to comment on issues that are under investigation by the police complaints commission. It is an investigation, and you, of all people, who stood in this House again and again and again over the history of your membership here, know that it is inappropriate for a minister to be involved in any way or make any comment about an investigation, particularly when you are ultimately in charge of the operation.

The issue is totally separate from a public inquiry, as you know, and yet you tried to put this off as a complaint about the public inquiry. It is not, and you know that. You know your comments could influence the result of the investigations.

Let me just remind you that whenever there was any question of integrity or ministerial conduct under the previous government, your caucus was the first to raise concerns. Your Premier was one of the first to raise concerns about ministerial integrity and competence.

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On May 28, 1991, for example, in talking about the Solicitor General, Mike Harris said: "The concern was whether the minister's actions were appropriate vis-à-vis

the integrity of the arm's length of the justice system." But today the shoe is on the other foot. It is you, Solicitor General, who crossed the line. Will you live up to the words of your own caucus colleagues in similar situations? Will you do the honourable thing and tender your resignation?

Hon Bob Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I'm not about to take any career counselling from the member for London Centre or her gracious friend Gordon Wilson. I want to say as well that if there's anything shameful it's the conduct of the third party and the member for London Centre and her colleague the acting leader with respect to what they've done in terms of misrepresenting what I said. In terms of taking quotes out of context—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): If the member is so inclined to use the word "misrepresenting," we sometimes find that offensive, and I would ask him if he would consider withdrawing it.

Hon Mr Runciman: If it offends you, Mr Speaker, I will withdraw, but it was quite clear, if you even listened to the tapes, certainly I made it abundantly clear I was not taking sides in what occurred on Monday. I think this is nothing more than very shameful political posturing on the part of the third party.

Mrs Boyd: Both the Solicitor General and the Attorney General have tried to separate their office from the position of their personal views, and in fact the Attorney General said the Solicitor General never commented on anything he didn't see directly. Well, go back to the statement he made on Wednesday morning. He said: "I think there was a breakdown in control by picket captains, and in fact I understand there were physical altercations between picket captains along the line. I think it indicates...." He did not observe that. He may have observed confidential information that was given to him as the Solicitor General as the head of the police force in this province, not that he could use politically to try and lay blame in this case, and that is exactly the issue.

I would tell the Solicitor General that his integrity is clearly tarnished here. He has not lived up to his ministerial responsibilities. He has not kept an arm's-length relationship from the police complaints commission investigation. "The only arm's-length approach we have seen has been an arm's-length approach to accepting ministerial responsibility," said Mike Harris in May 1991, and on June 4, 1991, the now Premier stated in this House: "Not one of us is untouched by the Solicitor General's failure to live up to his ministerial responsibilities. Why will he not show some integrity and at the very least step aside?"

The Speaker: Put your question.

Mrs Boyd: Mr Minister, will you follow your Premier's words, follow his advice and do the right thing before any further damage is done?

Hon Mr Runciman: I indicated earlier that I'm offended by the tone of this questioning. I'm especially offended by the member posing these questions. I want to remind the members of the third party and the members of this House that that member, as the Attorney General, signed a deal with Karla Homolka, a deal with the devil that most Ontarians find completely repugnant.

When she's calling for resignations, I ask her to take a long look in the mirror.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Can we get some order in here? The member for Algoma, do you have a point of privilege?

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): The Solicitor General, if anything I've ever seen compounded his error before, that performance just now did that in terms of the respect for the justice system in this province. This member, a member of the cabinet, the Attorney General, all of us here and the general public are fully aware that this government asked for an independent investigation of the case the solicitor has just raised, by an independent member of the judiciary, who decided and made a report which was made public that completely accepted and justified the decisions made by the previous administration. As a matter of fact, the Attorney General—

The Speaker: Order. Final supplementary.

Interjection.

The Speaker: Take your seat. Order. There is nothing procedurally out of order in this House.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. I recognize the member for London Centre for her final supplementary.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It does concern me that you would feel that there was nothing procedurally out of order in the Solicitor General's response. It seemed to me, and we were obviously totally uninvolved in the questioning, to be an unwarranted personal attack on a former minister of the crown and entirely inappropriate.

The Speaker: Order. Final supplementary.

Mrs Boyd: What the Solicitor General has done is to show his disrespect for the justice system. More than anything else, this demonstrates the inappropriateness of his conduct. The Solicitor General has shown no integrity in the issue at hand around the police complaints investigation. He can stand in this House and first of all not accept his own personal responsibility, and then try to destroy the reputation and the ability of the current Attorney General to accept the kinds of advice that have been given by the judiciary in a case. It's absolutely disgusting and it's very typical of this member—very typical of this member. It is the way he behaved again and again, going after minister after minister and attacking their personal integrity.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order.

Mrs Boyd: It is exactly the kind of issue that we ought to be dealing with. If one of our ministers or a minister in the Liberal government had tried to act as judge and jury the way you have, you would have been the first to attack. On June 20, 1994, in this place, Mike Harris said: "Now you are acting like judge and jury and saying, 'I'll decide which cases are serious enough that the minister can intervene on or not intervene on.'... She hasn't understood the fair rules of what a minister should do or ministerial conduct at any time that I have seen her in the performance of her duty."

Mr Minister, face up to the fact that you've made a mistake. You've made more than one mistake. You made

a very big mistake here today. You commented on issues where you should have known better. You allowed your temper and your own feelings to overcome you in the exercise of your ministerial duties. You have tainted the process, and you are responsible. This is about your ability to act with integrity in this province as the Solicitor General. Step aside.

Hon Mr Runciman: I indicated in the initial answer that the member has been selectively using quotes from a scrum, and if the full quotations were utilized, it certainly was quite clear that I indicated that I would not take any sides and had not reached any judgements with respect to what happened on Monday other than my own personal experiences which I observed when getting through the picket line. I have no intention to resign on the basis of what the member has put forward, and I don't believe there's any justification for the call.

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RED HILL CREEK EXPRESSWAY

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I have a question to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, in response to a question on March 20 in the House, you agreed to a third-party independent review of the funding dispute with the Red Hill Creek Expressway in Hamilton. You confirmed this outside the House as well. Let me quote, referring to the minister:

"He says the region's estimates are too rich and is prepared to have a third party intervene. 'It would certainly prove one thing—whether (Regional Chairman) Terry Cooke is right or whether we are right,' Mr Palladini said yesterday. He said he would stand by findings of the review."

Today he is quoted in the Spectator as saying: "There are no more funds. I just don't have the money in my budget. I feel \$100 million is one heck of an amount of money to commit to a municipal road at this time."

Minister, let me remind you that the commitment to the expressway was not at this time. The commitment to the expressway was by your Premier, Mr Harris, in December 1994, and that commitment was to fully fund that expressway. You don't realize that the regional numbers are correct. Minister, you don't realize that you have shortchanged the region by \$50 million. You are backtracking. You are doing your best to skate and damage control and you have betrayed the region.

Minister, can you tell me what has changed between Thursday and today, why you have gone back on your commitment of a third-party review of the cost of the expressway, and why you have betrayed the region once again?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): I would just like to, number one, say to the honourable member across the road here that I haven't gone back on my commitment. I've agreed to an independent proposal. I just want to build the highway. That's all I want to do, and we've committed \$100 million to do it. So my commitment, this government's commitment, is there. It has not wavered. I don't know what else the honourable member would like me to say.

Mr Agostino: Minister, you obviously have proven once again you don't understand the issue. The regional

chairman has said that your \$100 million is at least \$50 million short. The chairman of the committee has said it's at least \$50 million short. It is established that the money you have committed to the expressway will not cover the provincial costs. It is clear you have fallen short by \$50 million to the commitment that you made. You are really playing fast and loose with your words here. I really believe your government and yourself have been nothing but masters of deception to the region in the way you have handled this issue.

Your commitment, the commitment that the Premier made in December 1994 for a full six-lane expressway—let me explain this to you clearly. That commitment would have meant \$182 million of provincial money towards the cost. Minister, I realize you're not listening. Just listen for a second so you understand the issue. Minister, the Premier's commitment was of \$182 million of provincial money. The scaled-down project is \$150 million. What you have given is \$100 million. Therefore, there's a \$50-million shortfall.

I'm not sure how much more clear I can make it. I'm not sure why you stood here on Thursday and committed to abide by the independent review and today you have said no. Why are you misleading the people of Hamilton, Minister? Why are you telling the House one thing and saying something else outside? Can you tell me, Minister, will you once again have another opportunity here to save the political career of your four Tory members, to go back on the betrayal you have made—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The question has been asked.

Mr Agostino: —to help Hamilton-Wentworth and again commit yourself to a third-party review of the funding and commit yourself to abide by that review to see who is right?

Hon Mr Palladini: I think I would like to go on record that the honourable member is actually misleading the facts, because I agreed to an independent proposal. I'm going to reiterate: I just want to build the expressway.

As far as the funding the member is referring to that this government has committed, number one, there is probably in excess of \$80 million that's presently on the ground on the expressway, so if we add the \$100 million, it brings it up to \$180 million, as he's referring to. But I want to correct the member. There was never a set amount discussed or committed by this government. There were various proposals on how to build a highway, how many lanes, but there was never a set amount.

I want to say to the honourable member once again, and to the people of Hamilton-Wentworth, that this government wants to go ahead and get the job done.

The Speaker: New question.

Mr Agostino: Mr Speaker, on a point of order: The minister said I was misleading the House.

Interjections.

Mr Agostino: It's this minister, this government, that make it clear he is misleading the House.

The Speaker: Order. I wish the members would not use that word any longer. It's been used by you, it's been used by him, and I would ask you to reconsider and not use that word "mislead."

JUSTICE SYSTEM

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question to the Attorney General. Recognizing that both he and his colleague the Solicitor General carry a very important portfolio for the protection of the administration of justice in this province, I have in my hand the news release that was issued by the Attorney General on March 18, following the publication by the Honourable Patrick Galligan of his findings, in which the Attorney General said: "I am accepting Mr Galligan's advice. This government will move quickly to take action on the two recommendations made by Mr Galligan." He further stated: "Mr Galligan stated that the decision taken by the prosecutors was driven by sheer necessity. The authorities were faced with the unpleasant fact that if Paul Bernardo was to be prosecuted for murder, it was essential that they have Karla Homolka's evidence and cooperation."

After hearing the response of the Solicitor General to the second question of my colleague from London, when he was dealing with issues related to the investigation by the police complaints commission, does the Attorney General believe that the comments made by his colleague were appropriate with regard to the Homolka case and Mr Galligan's recommendations? If he doesn't believe they were appropriate, does he repudiate them and does he regret the fact that the Solicitor General didn't have at least the compunction to withdraw his remarks subsequently?

Hon Bob Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to say for the record that those comments were made independently and inappropriately, and I withdraw them.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I fully subscribe to the remarks that I made about Mr Justice Galligan's report. I indicated very clearly what my position was. Certainly, the Solicitor General has now indicated that those remarks were his own and that they were independent.

Mr Wildman: We appreciate that the Solicitor General has withdrawn his remarks now rather than when he could have done it before. I also regret the fact that he has seen fit to leave the House in the middle of a question that deals specifically with his integrity.

Since the Attorney General and the Solicitor General were dealing with the issue that we raised in terms of the Solicitor General's comments in relation to the police complaints commission investigation, is the Attorney General aware that in the press on March 21, the public domain, the Solicitor General is quoted as saying:

"I think the tape"—that is the confidential OPP tape to which the Solicitor General has access as the minister responsible for the police—"indicates (strikers) were given fair warning and that the picket lines broke down. I think there was a breakdown in terms of control by picket captains."

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Doesn't that indicate that the Solicitor General has taken a position with regard to the situation on the picket line and the actions of the police, and if that does, does that not then in a general sense—not specific to what the

Solicitor General himself saw—perhaps prejudice the investigation by the police complaints commissioner?

Hon Mr Harnick: I reiterate my remarks that the police complaints commissioner investigates independently. He is an independent individual who has no connection with the Ministry of the Solicitor General.

Further, as I indicated before, the particular issues that we are dealing with involve individual complaints, of which no one other than the police complaints commissioner has any information. We have no information as to who filed the complaints. That is within the realm of the police complaints commissioner. We have no information as to the nature of those complaints. We have no information as to who is involved in those complaints.

So it is something to which there is no connection, and that is why the police complaints commissioner will continue, as he is obligated to do, to investigate the complaints that have been put before him and at the same time we have indicated that we are going to have a public inquiry into the nature of everything that went on on that Monday, and we are in the course of trying to deal with terms of reference that will satisfy the opposition parties, who have given us their input, and we are now weighing that information.

HIGHWAY 27

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Minister, in the north end of the city of Etobicoke is a stretch of highway that is currently the responsibility of your ministry. This roadway, Highway 27, has businesses adjacent to it which cannot build laneways for access because the speed limit is too high. I am pleased to note that the city has supported the businesses' interest to have the speed limit lowered. I would like to know what your ministry can do to help solve the problem.

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): This government is committed to ensuring municipalities have the freedom and flexibility to make decisions about their road system. Highway 27 is a road which serves mostly a local purpose and it just doesn't make sense for the provincial government to support these types of roads.

Highway 27 is one of the roads which we are going to be looking to transfer, allowing the municipality to make the decisions on its own. This could mean a huge reduction of red tape for businesses who no longer would have to go through several weeks of levels of approvals in order to get businesses going. Less red tape, less time and less hassle can lead to businesses with more time to make money and invest in this province.

Mr Ford: I'm certainly glad to hear that. By way of supplementary, I'd like to ask when the minister expects Highway 27 to be transferred.

Hon Mr Palladini: This government will always show responsibility. In order to allow municipalities some time to adjust, we are looking at phasing in transfers over a three-year period. As far as Highway 27, I am not exactly sure at what time, but this process will begin sometime in April 1997. We are going to be phasing in numerous highways across this province. We've already started that process and we are going to be phasing in more highways

in 1997. Eventually we hope to achieve what this government wants to achieve in the best interests of fiscal responsibility and hopefully finish by April 1998. But we will allow municipalities ample time to make the adjustments in order to meet their commitments.

NORTHERN AIR SERVICE

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I have a question for the Minister of Northern Development and Mines. On November 29, you, the Minister, ordered the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission to close down norOntair. On Friday, norOntair will be closed down. The 17 communities that were receiving service from norOntair will now be getting service from private carriers. In some cases—Elliot Lake, for example—the service that will be provided by the private carrier is inadequate to the community needs.

Yesterday, you told this House that Hornepayne, Chapleau and Gore Bay would be served by Voyageur Airways and that the government would subsidize the contract. Therefore, I have a number of questions and I think the people of Ontario have a number of questions regarding that announcement. We want to know if the contract to Voyageur Airways was tendered, we want to know what the cost of the tender was, we want to know if the communities that may lose private air service will qualify for this subsidy and we want to know if you will positively guarantee the 17 communities that they will continue to have air service, not just in April but in the foreseeable future.

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): That's a good question; there are a lot of questions there. As the member mentioned, to get the financial house in order in this province, we've reduced the subsidy to the ONTC board by \$10 million. We allowed them the flexibility of selling off the government-subsidized airline that cost the taxpayers of the province over \$4 million. The private sector has picked up the role that used to be subsidized by over \$4 million. The assets, in excess of \$14 million, have gone towards helping the ONTC preserve and enhance its services in the north. So the money stays in the north. There will be interest on that money, or reinvestments will create wealth and secure the role of the ONTC in the future to expand the economy of northern Ontario.

The question revolves around the communities mentioned. There was an interim agreement entered into by the ONTC board, and I say an interim, short-term agreement. When that expires—and I think that's the question most northerners want to know—will there be air service in the future? I think that the answer is yes, that the private sector is showing its ability to grow into this. At the end of that period, I'm sure there'll be a tender if there is a subsidy that's required. The subsidy, I might add—and allowing the sale of the assets to be reinvested in the north—is far more efficient and helpful to northerners than subsidizing the whole airline.

Mr Michael Brown: The minister is flying by the seat of his pants on this issue. I asked the minister specifically: What did the tender cost? Where there a tender?

There was no answer to that. Will other communities that may lose their air service or have inappropriate levels of air service qualify for this same deal? How much will that cost the taxpayers of Ontario in total? Give us the answer to very simple, straightforward questions.

Hon Mr Hodgson: As the member knows full well, the ONTC board has been working with a group of municipal advisers and they've been working with the affected communities. They're the ones that entered in and announced yesterday the three communities would be served. I can ask the board to report back to the member on the details around that question.

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COMMENTS OF THE SOLICITOR GENERAL

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is for the Solicitor General. Now that you've had a little break and a little opportunity to cool down, I want you to think about the way in which you withdrew your comments. You made a comment that you were expressing an independent opinion, so I think it's very important for the people of Ontario to hear from you, the person who is responsible for policing in this province, whether you really think it is ever possible for a Solicitor General to maintain his integrity and express a personal opinion about a matter that is under police investigation. Is that not the same issue as an Attorney General making a personal comment about a case that is before the courts?

The issue of independence and arm's-lengthness from investigations and from process is extraordinarily important. Would the Solicitor General please tell us how he thinks, by saying that what he said on Monday or what he said on Wednesday was his personal observation, he in any way can justify making comments about a matter that is under a police investigation?

Hon Bob Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): In response, at the outset I want to apologize to the member for London Centre for my earlier remarks. I want to emphasize what I've said when responding to this question today and before, that if you go back and take a look at the complete text of the scrum, it was certainly quite clear—and I went out of my way to ensure that anyone talking to me in that scrum was aware—that I had formed no judgements whatsoever with respect to what occurred on Monday with respect to complaints lodged against police on an individual or group basis.

Also, when I've spoken with respect to the events of Monday, I've talked about the experiences that I and the Minister of Transportation and the member for Oshawa experienced and our own observations about that particular incident, which is not the subject—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Runciman: You don't want me to answer this question—which is not the subject of any of the complaints that have been lodged.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): How do you know? How do you know that?

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member for Beaches-Woodbine is out of order.

Mrs Boyd: The important issue here is the member stood, as did the AG, and said that neither of them has

any idea what the matters are under complaint, no idea what issues are there. There were certainly public complaints made about lack of warning, and we've already read out three or four times what this minister said about there being an appropriate warning. I can do it again, if he'd like to hear it.

If you don't know what the subject of the complaints would be, how can you possibly stand there and say that your remarks in no way prejudice the investigation? This is absolutely evidence that you have stepped over the line and, Minister, you should resign. This is ridiculous.

Hon Mr Runciman: I'm not going to question the independence of the police complaints commission. I think they can reach a conclusion with respect to any individual complaints, which I am unaware of, on the basis of the facts. I'm certainly quite prepared to support the public release of any recommendations or conclusions coming from the police complaints commission to ensure that there is no suggestion whatsoever of any pressure being brought to bear on the commissioner.

INJURED WORKERS

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): Recently, on Tuesday, February 13, the Honourable Cam Jackson, minister without portfolio responsible for workers' compensation reform, met with injured workers in my community. In the meeting with them—and I must say they were very appreciative of the opportunity to do that—they related their experiences in their workplaces, how they were injured, their experience with officials and staff at WCB and their suggestions for reform.

My question to the minister is on behalf of the injured workers he met with in my office and indeed all those around the province he has met recently. Minister, what have you been hearing from injured workers across the province during your consultation?

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Workers' Compensation Board]): I want to thank the member for his question, and I want to indicate to members of this House that in the opportunities I've had to consult with injured workers directly in the province several themes have come out very predominantly. The injured workers I met with in the member for St Catharines-Brock's riding indicated problems that they'd experienced with adjudication at the Workers' Compensation Board. In fact, one of the individuals I met, who was a truck driver, was ready to go back to work on a Monday but got a phone call on the previous Friday saying the WCB had ordered him to take voc rehab at Downsview. This individual had had his documentation lost on two separate occasions; he had to rephotostat it.

The bottom line is that we're getting concerns being expressed from injured workers about the size of the bureaucracy at the Workers' Compensation Board. Frankly, there's every reason for injured workers to be concerned when in 1985 there were about 3,800 employees at the Workers' Compensation Board and now there are almost 5,000 employees there and yet we've had a 40% drop in the lost time for injuries in this province.

There's a legitimate question being raised by injured workers with respect to looking at the administrative structure of the board but also to looking at rehabilitation

services as well, which many have indicated have not allowed for them to return to work early, in a timely fashion, and to return them to their pre-accident state so that they can continue with the productive work that they deserve and that they believe they're entitled to.

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to draw your attention to part VI, section 23(k) of the standing rules of order in relationship to your earlier response to me that there had been no violation of the orders of the House in the Solicitor General's response to the member for London Centre. Section 23(k) says that a member shall be called to order by the Speaker if he or she "Uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder." There are sections before that which similarly say you must call to order a member who "Makes allegations..." or "Imputes false or unavowed motives to another member."

I suggest to you that this may be the most appalling example of a minister responding to a question by launching a personal attack on a member of the opposition and, in this case, a former minister of the crown. But I would also suggest it is not the first time in this House, including today, that ministers have responded to questions by launching an attack based on totally non-factual statements which members of the opposition have no ability to respond to.

You have indicated that you want to observe a decorum in the House and to enforce the rules of order. I humbly suggest to you that unless you're prepared to administer the rules of order in a fairhanded and even way, there cannot be decorum in this House.

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): Mr Speaker, I'd like to speak on that point, and I'd like to agree with the leader of the official opposition. You have not hesitated—and yesterday was an example in this place, where you threw out my colleague the member for Lake Nipigon for an incident which I would say was very insignificant compared to what the Solicitor General has done in this place today. You then wrote us a letter yesterday afternoon suggesting that there had to be a restoration of decorum in this place.

I cannot advocate to my caucus that we should follow your instructions in terms of trying to restore decorum in this place when you allowed the Solicitor General to get away with what he got away with today. It went one more round of questions; you said absolutely nothing to the Solicitor General; he responded, eventually, after there was clearly an embarrassing question going to be asked to the Attorney General.

I hesitate to say this, but your leadership in this place is unacceptable, and I am very upset with the way that you have ruled in this place today. You have not dealt an even hand in this place today, and it's absolutely—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): Mr Speaker, I just want to inform you that under standing

order 34(a) I wish to advise you of my dissatisfaction with the response of the Minister of Northern Development and Mines, and I will file the appropriate form with the table.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): Mr Speaker, pursuant to standing order 34, I wish to advise you of my dissatisfaction with the response of the Minister of Transportation to my question on the Red Hill Expressway. I will ask for a late show on that as well.

1450

DECORUM IN CHAMBER

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I want to come back to the point that my leader raised simply because today at caucus I was advised by my House leader that there was some concern about decorum in the House. I've missed a couple of days in the last week and I gather that some people have been tossed out or threatened with expulsion because of their misconduct.

I've been thrown out of here for being a bad boy on occasion and I recognize the difficulty that any Speaker faces. We've all made mistakes and we expect vigorous and impartial adjudication from him.

Mr Speaker, I did hear the exchange this afternoon between the member for Brockville and the member for London Centre and I know that in the heat of battle we've all said things that on occasion we ought not to have said. I think the member for Leeds-Grenville has agreed, by virtue of his withdrawal, that he went too far today, and I must say he really went too far today.

But that aside, if you are inviting members, as you ought to, to behave themselves and if we don't behave ourselves, you're going to take action, you then are going to be, I think, very carefully watched as to how you rule in this place.

I must say, and I don't want to be provocative, that you are really going to have to give some thought to what it is you tolerate and what it is you won't tolerate. If you are prepared to tolerate the kind of observation and the kind of accusation that the member for Leeds-Grenville made with respect to the former Attorney General, the member for London Centre, in relation to one of the most tragic and controversial of court cases the province and country have every known and say nothing about that, and then show me or the rest of us the door because we might have dressed improperly or brought a coffee to this chamber or used words that you found grammatically incorrect, then I think you or anyone in your position is going to have a very difficult time.

I simply say again that on this day at our caucus, my House leader, the member for St Catharines, conveyed to me and my colleagues your concern about decorum in this place. I understand that entirely, but what we saw here today with respect to what the member for Leeds-Grenville said and what you did not do give me pause, and I hope give you pause as well.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I'm looking at page 18, the matter that has been raised by a number of members with regard to the exchange here in the House. Rule 23, specifically the matter that my colleague the member for

Fort William raised, is under subsection (k) and it says, "Uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder."

I think it is clear to everyone who saw and heard the exchange in this House that the Solicitor General did indeed use abusive and insulting language, and it certainly did create disorder.

But I would also suggest that there are other subsections of the rule that you should consider. The member, according to the rule, is out of order when he or she "makes allegations against another member"; "imputes false or unavowed motives to another member"; "introduces any matter in debate that in the opinion of the Speaker offends the practices and precedents of the House."

I would suggest that in his remarks, which he subsequently but not immediately withdrew, and not at the behest of yourself—

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): At the urging of his caucus members.

Mr Wildman: —but rather at the urgings, as my friend says, of his caucus mates—

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): And he was going to be embarrassed by a question to the AG.

Mr Chris Stockwell (Etobicoke West): Talk about imputing motives. That is imputing motives right there.

Mr Wildman: I think they were good motives.

Mr Speaker, I say very clearly that it is inappropriate for you not to have called him to order, particularly when members of the opposition, including myself, requested him to withdraw and raised the matter with you and you did not respond. When I listened very carefully just now to the matters raised by the Leader of the Opposition and our House leader, you did not make any response. What is the response? Did the member break these rules? If he did, then why was he not called to order and why was it at the behest of others that he withdrew the remarks?

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): I will review the Hansard and I will respond.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: What happened here today is troublesome. I don't want to talk on the same point as my colleague. It's a slightly different point. All right?

I am willing to acknowledge that the rules that are set out on page 18 of the rule book are for rules of debate and that question period can be considered a somewhat different matter. But the rules for debate ought to at least provide guidance as to what is appropriate within the House.

I think, Speaker, you should review those rules and subrules set out on page 18: "Makes allegations against another member....Imputes false or unavowed motives to another member....Charges another member with uttering a deliberate falsehood....Uses abusive or insulting language of a nature likely to create disorder....Speaks disrespectfully of Her Majesty....or the Governor General, or the Administrator of Canada, or the Lieutenant Governor, or the Administrator of the Province." I would say that somewhere in there the administration of justice, if not directly mentioned, is at least within the realm of what is being talked about.

Finally, "Introduces any matter in debate that in the opinion of the Speaker offends the practices and precedents of the House." Speaker, I would think that one of the precedents and practices of this House is not to cast utter disrespect on the administration of justice in this province. When someone gets up, a minister of the crown, a minister specifically charged with part of the administration of justice—in other words, the administration of the police—and literally disavows a very important criminal law case, one which has been further adjudicated upon by a judge in the form of a judicial inquiry, when the Solicitor General gets up and makes those kinds of comments, it calls this whole place into disrepute.

You can't expect people out there anywhere in society to have any respect for the administration of justice if you allow that kind of conduct to go on here in this House. Speaker, you have thrown people out of this House—

The Speaker: Order. You've made your—

Interjection.

The Speaker: Order. I indicated earlier I will be reviewing the remarks that have been made and I will be reporting back on what has been said.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It's very difficult to sit in this place and hear the kind of lecture that we are hearing at this point in time. What I am wondering is, when the point of order was raised by the Liberal caucus—and they referred to the discussion that they had in their caucus this morning about decorum in this place. I wonder if at all during their discussion they looked back on their own behaviour with the member for Scarborough North—

Mr Cooke: What is this, Mr Speaker?

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): This is not a point of order. This is ridiculous.

The Speaker: Order. You haven't got a point of order.
1500

PETITIONS

OMNIBUS LEGISLATION

Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East): "We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to withdraw Bill 26, the Savings and Restructuring Act, 1995. We object to the bill because it terminates the partnership between the government and the physicians to manage health care on a joint basis and gives unilateral power to the Minister of Health to make cuts and dictate medical practice. This is not good medicine for our health care."

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have a petition here signed by some 100 citizens from the community of Timmins and South Porcupine. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the members of the Ontario public service are earnestly attempting to negotiate an equitable and respectful collective agreement with the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas a fair collective agreement is evidence of this government's respect for Ontario's public services, the workers who provide them and those who need them; and

"Whereas by introducing Bill 7 and Bill 26 prior to commencing negotiations the government removed significant rights from OPSEU members that other workers in Ontario retain; and

"Whereas reducing the size of the civil service can be achieved through attrition without attacking basic rights and dignities of hard-working people,

"We, the following undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to negotiate responsibly and in good faith with the Ontario Public Service Employees Union towards a fair and respectful collective agreement."

I sign this petition.

MASSASAUGA PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga West): It's my pleasure to present to the Legislature this afternoon a petition supported with over 300 signatures asking that the government put a stop to the costly and unnecessary expansion of the Massasauga provincial park:

"Whereas we fully support the government's efforts to trim costs and balance our provincial budget; and

"Whereas we are concerned with the restrictions presently being implemented on the public access area of the Moon River basin; and

"Whereas there is no evidence of any past environmental damage that would justify the implementation of these restrictions; and

"Whereas the cost of implementing these restrictions will be passed on to the government and the taxpayers; and

"Whereas the implementation of the park's facilities and requirements in May 1996 will seriously reduce the local, privately operated tourism industry (marinas, summer resorts and fishing lodges),

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario and respectfully request that the development and planned expansion of the Massasauga provincial park be effectively stopped."

I affix my signature.

ST JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Common Sense Revolution states that a Conservative government will not cut health care; and

"Whereas during the 1995 election campaign the Conservatives clearly promised to defend the health care system but protect the ministry funding and stated in a campaign backgrounder, 'There will be no cut to health care funding by the Harris government,' this being their first and most important commitment,

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the Minister of Health to reject all recommendations put forward by the Hamilton health task force to the closure of St Joseph's Hospital, and we recommend that no hospitals should close in Hamilton-Wentworth."

I am pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition to the Minister of Health and the Hamilton-Wentworth District Health Council:

"Whereas the Hamilton-Wentworth Health Action Task Force, as part of their report, has recommended the closure of St Joseph's Hospital in Hamilton; and

"Whereas it is recognized the health care system should be made as efficient as possible; and

"Whereas the quality of health care in our community should not be sacrificed in the name of efficiency; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government promised to protect the quality of health care in Ontario; and

"Whereas we, the undersigned, believe that maintaining the presence of St Joseph's Hospital in downtown Hamilton is a vital component of our health care system,

"Therefore be it resolved that the Minister of Health and the Hamilton-Wentworth District Health Council ensure the continuance of St Joseph's Hospital at its present site."

I add my signature to theirs.

SCARBOROUGH GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I rise today to present a petition on behalf of a number of residents of Scarborough. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the recommendations of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council to close inpatient paediatric beds, the special care nursery and the burn unit at Scarborough General Hospital resulting in significantly reduced access to paediatric, newborn, and burn care for a large geographic area of Scarborough; and

"Whereas the paediatric unit, special care nursery and burn unit at Scarborough General Hospital provide very cost-effective, quality care,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to (1) continue paediatric services, including inpatient paediatric beds; (2) continue special care nursery services; (3) continue and combine Metropolitan Toronto's burn care at Scarborough General Hospital."

I am pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to

North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I have affixed my signature.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE PENSIONS

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have another petition here, this time again from people of Timmins, and it's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Bill 26 exempts the government as an employer from key legislation governing pensions in Ontario; and

"Whereas employees of the Ontario government have been stripped of their rights to access pension security, a right that other workers in Ontario have; and

"Whereas this represents the theft of hundreds of millions of dollars in pension benefits from working people; and

"Whereas as a result thousands of workers who face being laid off in the coming months could be forced into poverty;

"We, the following undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to reinstate the rights removed by schedule L of Bill 26."

It's signed some 100 citizens in the city of Timmins, and I sign the petition.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health will begin to charge seniors and social assistance recipients a \$2 user fee for each prescription filed on June 1, 1996; and

"Whereas Ontario's psychiatric populace rely heavily on prescription drugs to remain stable, and mental health care providers and in fact the general public are scared of the outcome of these patients who can't afford to buy the medication because of the \$2 dispensing fee, when it is normal policy to only prescribe them a two- to three-day supply of medication to prevent potential misuse or overdosing; and

"Whereas the perceived savings to health care from the \$2 copayment fee will not compensate for the suffering and misery caused by this user fee and will not even cover the cost of extra emergency services needed to people whose health has been jeopardized because they can no longer afford to pay for their medication;

"We, therefore, the undersigned Ontario residents, strongly urge this government to repeal this user fee plan before it takes effect on June 1, 1996, because of the potential dramatic increase in emergency and police services and the suffering and misery of human lives, especially psychiatric outpatients and those who depend on medication for their daily survival."

I've affixed my signature to this document.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a further petition from the United Food and Commercial Workers to the Parliament and the Honourable Elizabeth Witmer, Minister of Labour:

"Whereas we, the undersigned, are opposed to your government's proposed changes to Ontario's workers' compensation system, including elimination of the bipartite board of directors; reduced temporary benefits; introduction of the three-day period from the time of injury with no pay; legislated limits on entitlement, thereby excluding repetitive strain, chronic pain and stress claims from eligibility for compensation; reduced permanent pensions and pension supplements; and

"Whereas workers' compensation is not a handout; it is an insurance plan for which premiums are paid; it is a legal obligation that employers have to employees who 80 years ago traded their right to sue employers in return for this insurance plan;

"Therefore, we demand no reduction in existing benefits, improved re-employment and vocational rehabilitation, tightened enforcement of health and safety to prevent injuries, no reduction in current Workers' Compensation Board staff levels and that the bipartite board structure be left intact."

I affix my signature also.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation is intent on reducing northern winter road maintenance services; and

"Whereas such downgrading places the lives of northern residents at undue and unnecessary risk;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to disallow these reductions in service and to guarantee that winter roads across northern regions of the province receive the necessary maintenance to ensure the safe passage of drivers."

I'll affix my signature to this.

1510

SPENDING REDUCTIONS

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): I have a petition signed by over 2,100 individuals protesting the funding cuts to women's shelters, halfway houses, second-stage housing and family services. I present the petition and share the concerns that are being expressed.

PAY EQUITY

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): I have a petition that has been signed by over 1,200 people across the province. It reads:

"Whereas pay equity has not yet been achieved in many Ontario workplaces;

"Whereas fair wages for women are an important part of women's equality that has not yet been achieved;

"Whereas legislation is only beneficial when it is effectively enforced;

"Whereas the Minister of Labour has decided to close the services of Pay Equity Advocacy and Legal Services (PEALS) as a so-called cost-saving measure;

"Whereas PEALS is the only community legal clinic that helps all Ontario women who do not belong to a union to benefit from the pay equity legislation;

"Whereas PEALS has helped thousands of employees to obtain their pay equity rights; and

"Whereas PEALS has educated and empowered thousands of women on their pay equity rights;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"Provide PEALS with permanent funding to meet the ongoing needs for effective legal representation and community outreach;

"Provide PEALS with permanent funding to expand its mandate to provide services in all employment-related areas of law affecting women."

I have signed my signature to this document.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE PENSIONS

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition to the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Bill 26 exempts the government as an employer from key legislation governing pensions in Ontario; and

"Whereas employees of the Ontario government have been stripped of their right to access pension security, a right that other workers in Ontario have; and

"Whereas this represents the theft of hundreds of millions of dollars in pension benefits from working people; and

"Whereas as a result thousands of workers who face being laid off in the coming months could be forced into poverty;

"We, the following undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to reinstate the rights removed by schedule L of Bill 26."

I add my signature.

COLLEGE OF TEACHERS

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): I rise today to present a petition on behalf of local teachers and principals:

"We the undersigned want you to know that we, as the presidents of the teacher federations in your riding, are opposed to the College of Teachers which your government is intending to legislate. We feel that the creation of another level of bureaucracy is not needed. The Ontario Teachers' Federation has unanimously passed a motion in opposition to this college and has proposed a plan whereby OTF could very easily fulfil the powers and functions of such a college with considerably less expense."

TAX REDUCTION

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I have a very short petition but it's signed by over 400 residents of eastern Ontario. It simply reads:

"We, the undersigned, request that the Legislature of Ontario not approve any tax cuts until the causes of poverty and unemployment in Ontario are dealt with effectively and until the province's debt and deficit are paid down."

I have attached my signature to same as well.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): I have a petition that reads:

"Whereas the members of the Ontario public service are earnestly attempting to negotiate an equitable and respectful collective agreement with the government of Ontario; and

"Whereas a fair collective agreement is evidence of this government's respect for Ontario's public services, the workers who provide them and those who need them; and

"Whereas by introducing Bill 7 and Bill 26 prior to commencing negotiations, the government removed significant rights from OPSEU members that other workers in Ontario retain; and

"Whereas reducing the size of the civil service can be achieved through attrition, without attacking basic rights and dignities of hardworking people;

"We, the following undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to negotiate responsibly and in good faith with the Ontario Public Service Employees Union towards a fair and respectful collective agreement."

I have signed my name to that as well.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I have a petition signed by almost all the residents in Regency Towers, a senior citizens' residence in Thunder Bay, the tenants of which are very concerned about the government's intention to privatize public housing units. Mrs Lea Nuttall has sort of led the charge in my riding, and I'm pleased to read the petition:

"Whereas the Ministry of Housing has indicated an intent to privatize public housing units and intensify the housing crisis in Ontario; and

"Whereas all Ontarians have a basic right to fair and affordable shelter; and

"Whereas such privatization will cause financial hardship and insecurity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to disallow the privatization of public housing units and to ensure that existing structures are adequately maintained."

I am proud to sign my signature to that.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Pursuant to standing order 34(a), the member for Ottawa Centre has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Education and Training concerning the poll commissioned by the minister. That will be debated today at 6 pm.

Pursuant to standing order 34(a), the member for Algoma-Manitoulin has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Natural Resources and Northern Development and Mines concerning norOntair. This matter will be dealt with this evening at 6 pm.

Pursuant to standing order 34(a), the member for Hamilton East has given notice of his dissatisfaction with

the answer to his question given by the Minister of Transportation concerning the Red Hill Creek Expressway funding. This matter will also be debated at 6 pm today.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ADVOCACY, CONSENT AND SUBSTITUTE DECISIONS STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1995

LOI DE 1995 MODIFIANT DES LOIS EN CE QUI CONCERNE L'INTERVENTION, LE CONSENTEMENT ET LA PRISE DE DÉCISIONS AU NOM D'AUTRUI

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for third reading of Bill 19, An Act to repeal the Advocacy Act, 1992, revise the Consent to Treatment Act, 1992, amend the Substitute Decisions Act, 1992 and amend other Acts in respect of related matters / *Projet de loi 19, Loi abrogeant la Loi de 1992 sur l'intervention, révisant la Loi de 1992 sur le consentement au traitement, modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur la prise de décisions au nom d'autrui et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui concerne des questions connexes.*

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): All those in favour of third reading of Bill 19 will please say "aye." All opposed will say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members; it's a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1517 to 1525.

The Speaker: All those in favour of third reading of Bill 19 will please rise one at a time.

Ayes

| | | |
|--------------------|----------------------|-----------------------|
| Agostino, Dominic | Gerretsen, John | Ouellette, Jerry J. |
| Arnott, Ted | Gilchrist, Steve | Palladini, Al |
| Baird, John R. | Grandmaitre, Bernard | Parker, John L. |
| Bartolucci, Rick | Gravelle, Michael | Patten, Richard |
| Bassett, Isabel | Grimmett, Bill | Phillips, Gerry |
| Beaubien, Marcel | Guzzo, Garry J. | Preston, Peter |
| Boushy, Dave | Hardeman, Ernie | Ramsay, David |
| Bradley, James J. | Harnick, Charles | Rollins, E.J. Douglas |
| Brown, Michael A. | Hastings, John | Ross, Lillian |
| Carroll, Jack | Hodgson, Chris | Runciman, Bob |
| Chudleigh, Ted | Jackson, Cameron | Ruprecht, Tony |
| Clement, Tony | Johnson, Bert | Sampson, Rob |
| Cordiano, Joseph | Kells, Morley | Sergio, Mario |
| Crozier, Bruce | Klees, Frank | Shea, Derwyn |
| Cunningham, Dianne | Lalonde, Jean-Marc | Skarica, Toni |
| Danford, Harry | Leadston, Gary L. | Smith, Bruce |
| DeFaria, Carl | Marland, Margaret | Snobelen, John |
| Doyle, Ed | Martiniuk, Gerry | Spina, Joseph |
| Duncan, Dwight | Maves, Bart | Sterling, Norman W. |
| Ecker, Janet | McGuinty, Dalton | Tilson, David |
| Elliott, Brenda | Miclash, Frank | Tsubouchi, David H. |
| Fisher, Barbara | Morin, Gilles E. | Turnbull, David |
| Flaherty, Jim | Munro, Julia | Villeneuve, Noble |
| Ford, Douglas B. | Murdoch, Bill | Wilson, Jim |
| Fox, Gary | Mushinski, Marilyn | Witmer, Elizabeth |
| Froese, Tom | Newman, Dan | Wood, Bob |
| Galt, Doug | O'Toole, John | |

The Speaker: All those opposed, please rise one at a time.

Nays

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Bisson, Gilles | Hampton, Howard | Martin, Tony |
| Boyd, Marion | Lankin, Frances | Pouliot, Gilles |
| Christopherson, David | Laughren, Floyd | Silipo, Tony |
| Churley, Marilyn | Marchese, Rosario | Wildman, Bud |
| Cooke, David S. | Martel, Shelley | |

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 80; the nays 14.

The Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

LAND USE PLANNING AND PROTECTION ACT, 1995

LOI DE 1995 SUR LA PROTECTION ET L'AMÉNAGEMENT DU TERRITOIRE

Mr Hardeman, on behalf of Mr Leach, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 20, An Act to promote economic growth and protect the environment by streamlining the land use planning and development system through amendments related to planning, development, municipal and heritage matters / *Projet de loi 20, Loi visant à promouvoir la croissance économique et à protéger l'environnement en rationalisant le système d'aménagement et de mise en valeur du territoire au moyen de modifications touchant des questions relatives à l'aménagement, la mise en valeur, les municipalités et le patrimoine.*

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): I rise today to speak on Bill 20, the bill designed to help Ontario's economy by cutting red tape in the province's land use planning system. I'm speaking on behalf of Al Leach, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Mr Leach is in the hospital and is unable to be here today.

This bill will rectify the problems of Bill 163, the planning act introduced by the previous government. Municipalities, developers, builders and planning professionals each voiced concern about that act. It was tied up in too much red tape and detail, the approval system took too long and it cost too much. It was supposed to allow municipalities to make decisions, but municipalities told us it didn't. They wanted changes.

Bill 20 will fix the problems with the planning system. The legislation addresses many concerns expressed by the government and voiced by municipalities, environmentalists and developers.

The bill focuses on three important issues. It creates a faster and more understandable system, a system guided by clear, concise policies dealing only with issues that really should be under the provincial jurisdiction. It provides municipalities with the flexibility to make local decisions, since they are the people who best understand local circumstances, and it protects the environment while clearing obstacles to growth.

As you know, the Land Use Planning and Protection Act, 1995, received first and second reading last fall and was referred to the standing committee on resources

development for public hearings. I would point out the public hearings process accommodated everyone who wanted to put forward their views. Everyone who wanted to be heard had their say.

At this point, I'd like to commend the committee members for their work in carrying this bill at committee. We introduced some amendments to the bill in committee and we bring forward the amended bill to the House today for third reading. Some of the amendments reflect concerns that were raised during the public hearing process last month; others are technical clarifications.

I'd like to address the three significant changes made in the legislation: minor variances, public meetings on subdivisions and grandfathering of apartments in houses.

With respect to minor variances, the intention of the legislation was that council should have the final authority for minor variance decisions. This decision was made in accordance with the goals of Bill 20: to streamline the planning process and give municipalities more decision-making authority.

At the hearings we heard over and over again that everyone who wanted to appeal minor variance decisions should have the same right to be heard by the Ontario Municipal Board as those wanting to appeal other planning decisions. We listened. The planning system must balance the need for quick decisions with the need to be fair. Therefore, we are reinstating the OMB process for minor variance appeals.

The second significant change adopted by the standing committee deals with the authority to require public meetings on plans of subdivision and consent. The amendment restores provisions which allow the minister, by regulation, to require public meetings on plans of subdivision and consent. Again people told the standing committee they felt public input and consultation were important. They were concerned about those provisions being dropped, and again we listened and amended the legislation.

The third change deals with the apartments-in-houses provision of the Residents' Rights Act. Prior to last month's hearing, our position was that grandfathering would apply to second units that existed legally last November 16, the date the bill was introduced. We saw it applying where a building permit or change-of-use permit for the second unit had been issued on that date. This retroactive provision was developed to give back to municipalities, as quickly as possible, the authority over apartments in houses and to prevent a flood of last-minute applications.

During the hearings, however, several municipalities said this created an awkward legal position for them. Builders and home owners who had wanted to create second units but had not yet received building permits were caught by the November 16 deadline, so we have amended the legislation to make the grandfathering date for new units coincide with the date of the legislation's proclamation, following third reading and royal assent. This ensures that municipalities have time to inform their residents about the change.

Finally, as many members know, we are conducting a fundamental review of the Development Charges Act and intend to introduce a new act by the fall. Until then, Bill

20 provides for a transition period that extends existing development charges bylaws and grants increases only with the minister's approval. This means that until the review is complete, municipalities cannot bring in new charges or increase their existing charges.

Our critics have suggested this government is proposing a planning system that guts the environment. This is not the case. We are in favour of good planning, not slow planning or inefficient planning, and we are against any approval system that discourages development because it can't say yes or no in a reasonable length of time. We will continue to have tough environmental protection measures in the planning process.

There were several technical amendments made to the bill during the clause-by-clause analysis by the standing committee on resources development, but the major thrust of the legislation remains the same: Bill 20 restores a balance to the planning system in Ontario, allows for increased municipal autonomy and creates a streamlined system which makes provision for local solutions to local problems.

I should also like to mention that as part of the revisions to the Ontario planning system, the ministry's draft policy statement was issued in January. If the legislation is the process, the policy statement is the government's vision of what it wants to accomplish and the values it wants to apply to the process.

The policy statement was circulated to a range of ministry stakeholders including municipalities, planning officials, planning boards and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. It was issued to the Urban Development Institute and the home builders' associations and it was given to other ministries for their own stakeholders. Consultation was extensive. Submissions were invited until March 4, and we have received more than 200. We are in the process of reviewing all submissions and will take all comments into account as we prepare the final policy statement, which will be brought out when Bill 20 is proclaimed.

Bill 20 will not only improve the planning system; it will help clear a path for economic development and it will contribute to a climate that will encourage investment in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments or questions?

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): As the critic for municipal affairs for our party, I must say that the comments made by the parliamentary assistant show a lack of understanding for what you're really doing in regard to this bill, especially when it comes to what you're doing in regard to the Planning Act as it affects the environment.

You have done a number of moves within the Planning Act. Primarily you're saying that now you're only going to have to "have regard" for the provincial regulations rather than being "consistent with." We've gone through that debate at the committee. A lot of people came before the committee and presented and said what that will do is, in effect, ratchet down the standards that we presently have within the province of Ontario when it comes to protecting the environment and really pit one community up against the other.

There are a whole bunch of other examples about what you've done under Bill 20 that really mean to say that this province is going to take a severe step backwards when it comes to planning in the province of Ontario.

I think the parliamentary assistant recognizes that there was a very extensive consultation process undergone by Mr Sewell under our government, under the NDP government, that took about three and a half to four years. There was, I would say, a consensus built between both the environmental community and the development community about how you're able to balance off the interests of developers and those of the environment so that we can have sane and safe planning for the province of Ontario that responds to the needs of the economy but also responds to the needs of the environment.

For you to stand in this House today and say this government is not doing anything under Bill 20 that's contrary to the protection of the environment is not right. In fairness, you must recognize this bill is really all about giving the power directly to developers so that they can go ahead and do planning and not take into regard a whole bunch of issues that have to do with the protection of our environment. This is a major step backwards when it comes to protecting our environment in Ontario.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): I want to congratulate my colleague the member for Oxford on a great speech.

I think what we heard during the committee hearings, and I sat on the committee for the full three weeks, was that people believed that the best place to make decisions is at the local municipality when it comes to these type of issues.

I think what this bill has done is it has sought a balance between the environment and the economy. My honourable colleague opposite talked about the Sewell commission, which was a rather lengthy process, and I think it would be fair to say that there wasn't a consensus built in. Obviously, this piece of legislation that has come before the House is evidence that the long and lengthy discussions held by the Sewell commission did not achieve a consensus anywhere in the province of Ontario and particularly with achieving that fundamental balance between the environment and the economy which we think is so important to long-term development of the province.

As we went from city to city in our public hearings, we heard from numerous presenters in all parts of the province who spoke in favour of the bill—including my home community of Ottawa where our municipality spoke, represented by our regional chair, Peter Clark, and we also heard from the mayor of Ottawa—and who believe this bill was worthy of support. We found support all over the province for this legislation.

1540

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I had the opportunity to sit in on a couple of the hearings with respect to Bill 20. I want to commend the new member for Oxford, who I thought, at least during the time I was in the committee, did an exemplary job in carrying an important and controversial piece of legislation through the process.

In the previous Parliament, the Rae government brought forward a major piece of planning legislation that

was thought by many to have erred on the side of preservation. There's no question that the current government's Bill 20 has a very clear pro-development bias, which is what I think one would expect from a Conservative government. There are elements of this policy that I support. As a member from rural Ontario, there is no question that my constituents were very concerned with some of the directions of the Sewell commission, so to that extent, I want to say there are aspects of Bill 20 that I support and that would certainly be supported by a lot of my constituents in eastern Ontario.

On the other side, there are aspects of the bill that I think are negative, are worrisome, are dangerous. Perhaps my biggest concern remains that over the years, anyone who has been involved in local or certainly provincial politics—I can only speak about my provincial involvement. I've seen the development industry transfer huge costs downstream to Her Majesty's provincial government. When I think of what taxpayers provincially were expected to and have had to pay for, months, years, decades after the fact, I wonder what kind of discipline my friend the member for Oxford and his colleagues on the treasury bench are going to show when, in a world that is clearly more pro-development—and should mistakes be made and significant costs be incurred, I fully expect that Her Majesty's Ontario subjects will be saved harmless from the kinds of multimillion-dollar bills they have been forced to pay in previous times under all previous administrations.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I will be speaking further to this bill later, but just for a moment here I want to say to the parliamentary assistant, the member for Oxford, and the member for Nepean that I sat through most of those committee hearings, and when I hear from that side of the House that we now have a consensus and we didn't have one before—that's been implied—let me tell this House that there is no consensus whatsoever.

What I saw was a complete polarization. The people from the developer side and some municipalities in support came in loving this bill. When I asked them if they were consulted and whether they got what they wanted in the bill, they inevitably said yes and yes. When environmentalists and community groups came to speak to the committee, when I asked that question their answers were no and no.

When the parliamentary assistant read out here the three major amendments, none of them, not one, had to do with any of the amendments I put forward and which were put forward by some of the environmentalists who have a long, long history with the Planning Act, who spent four years of their lives involved throughout the Sewell process and beyond that—not one amendment. They were not at any point whatsoever treated with any kind of respect for their expertise—completely left out of the picture. So don't be surprised that people are very angry and are accusing you of only listening to one side in this issue. Unfortunately, all the evidence points to the fact that you only listened to one side.

Regarding the draft policy statements, I was very interested to hear the parliamentary assistant rhyme off whom they had consulted with. I know they tried to consult with some environmentalists. However, it wasn't

serious consultation; it was, "Let's get to know you a little bit," and then they were ignored.

Mr Hardeman: I'd like to thank the member for Nepean and the member for Renfrew North for their kind comments. I would also like to state to the member for Renfrew North that we do not believe the environmental policy statements have been weakened, that there's any greater risk after Bill 20 than with Bill 163 of having problems in Ontario that the province would become responsible for.

I also want to address the member for Cochrane South, who suggested that the change from "shall be consistent with" to "shall have regard to" completely guts the environmental aspect of Bill 20. I'd point out that a great number of the deputants coming before our committee came forward with the recommendation that we go to "shall have regard to," and all suggested that they understood what that meant, that it meant they must adhere to that type of policy unless there was a specific reason they could not achieve that requirement; that the provincial policy statements in many areas overlap and in fact are contradictory as to which resource should be protected, and that there is a need for local autonomy to make those types of decisions and only going back to "shall have regard to" would make that possible.

We also have to remember that many cases have been before the Ontario Municipal Board, where the board too realized that "shall have regard to" meant they should adhere to those policy statements if that could be achieved.

I would also point out that there were very few comments to the actual Bill 20, as it relates to the environment, only to that change in the wording. The majority of environmental concerns expressed were based on the policy statements, which were being reviewed, as I mentioned in the statement, and the review was to be completed by March 4. We have received many comments from people concerned about the environment and we will be dealing with those as we deal with the policy statements.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Before continuing the debate on this, I would request that my time be split equally with the member for St Catharines. I'd request unanimous consent for that.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it agreed? It is agreed.

Mr Gerretsen: Thank you. First of all, it was very interesting to listen to the comments made by the last three or four members. It's quite obvious that each of them seems to have a slightly different interpretation of what happened at the various meetings we held around the province.

I also think it's very interesting for the government to talk about a sense of balance with respect to the planning legislation. That's certainly what we in this party believe should happen, that the planning legislation should not be totally dominated by either one sector or the other. Unfortunately, this bill doesn't do it. It certainly doesn't create the kind of balance that people are looking for in their planning legislation for the proper development of the province.

It's true that some people feel that Bill 163 went too far. With all respect to the former government, let's be

fair and honest and say that Bill 163 wasn't around long enough for anyone to really monitor the effect that bill had on the development or non-development that took place in the province. Bill 163 was around for only about six or seven months and it would have been too early to judge the results, although it's certainly true that within the development community and within the municipal community there was a sense that the requirements of 163 were going to be too onerous, that it was going to take too long to get proper development through, that it was in effect going to harm the development industry.

What's very interesting, and the parliamentary assistant made comment on it, is that really the whole planning process in Ontario is a two-stage process. On the one hand we deal with the Planning Act, which deals with process, and on the other hand it deals as much with the policy statements that the province and indeed the municipalities on an individual basis through their official plans put forward. It's the combination of those two factors, the policy and the process document, the procedural document, that in effect leads to the planning that takes place in our communities.

1550

Unfortunately, this committee had absolutely no say over what's going to be in the policy statement. So we were dealing with only sort of half of the equation, and indeed we were dealing with the smaller half, the process side of things.

It's interesting to note in the parliamentary assistant's statement that he is very quick to point out that the policy statement has been circulated among the stakeholders, such as the development industry, the municipalities and the home builders. Well, I suggest to you that there's a whole other group of people out there who have just as much at stake there, and those people are not developers; they are not members of the development industry; they are not members of individual councils. No, they are the general public of the province of Ontario.

If there is one overriding criticism that can be made of this bill, it is that in the hopes of getting things on as quickly as possible, getting things moving, there can be no question about it that the ministry talked with the development industry and talked with the municipalities, but it never consulted with the general public. It is so evident in a number of different areas of this bill that the general public's attitude or involvement in the planning process really has been minimized.

First of all, when we look at the time reductions—and I'll have much more to say about this later on—the time reductions in the bill as it affects the general public basically go from 30 days that the general public has to respond on a particular official plan amendment or a zoning amendment to 20 days. The optics of the situation are that by cutting 10 days off, somehow development applications will be dealt with in a more speedy fashion, and obviously we can get things on a lot quicker and we can get things done at the local level a lot quicker than used to be the case.

As many delegations that came before the committee indicated, for a variety of reasons a 20-day appeal period simply isn't long enough for people who are serious about a particular development matter or who have some

serious concerns about it to frame those concerns in an adequate and substantial way, to allow them to do that within that period of time.

The other thing that was very interesting, and another way in which the general public was sort of shut out of the whole debate, was the loss of appeals. I will grant you that the ministry has now decided that appeals to the OMB for minor variances will continue to be the case. That was as a result of almost unanimous, I would say, support from all the groups that came before the committee.

Mr Baird: Public consultation.

Mr Gerretsen: And he's right. It was as a result of public consultation that this particular change was made. But the significant part is that they were forced into it, that there was no consultation or there was no consideration prior to that when the bill was first introduced to whether or not the public was going to lose anything by not allowing a right of appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board with respect to minor variances. And we all know how important minor variances are in our own particular neighbourhoods. They are the situations in which people by and large can relate to the planning process. They are the types of situations that people will deal with or the results of which people will deal with on a day-to-day basis.

The other thing that was very interesting is that there was no public meeting required for the approval of subdivisions or for severances. Now a suggestion has been made that in effect that be done by way of regulation in certain appropriate circumstances and situations. Well, I would suggest to you that again, for most of the general public, it's only at the time when a subdivision in effect is being planned, when a drawing is presented showing the layout of the various streets, of the density allocations of the parkland, of all the other various amenity areas in a particular subdivision, that people really realize what is going to be built next to them.

To have an official plan designation or to have a global zoning of a piece of property next to a property that a person may be living in is one thing, but it's only when an actual subdivision plan is developed and people realize how their particular property, their home, their commercial-industrial property is going to relate to the newly proposed area—it's only then that they realize that they really have an interest in it.

I can remember as a former municipal councillor many meetings dealing with official plans in general when, quite frankly, it was very difficult to get people out. I can tell you, in the community that I'm from, planning has always been something that people have taken a special interest in and certainly it's one of the reasons why a lot of people, including myself initially, got involved in local government because there is a tremendous interest in planning in an old community like the city of Kingston.

But I can tell you, until you actually put some meat and bones on a particular plan by way of a development plan or by way of a subdivision plan, until you actually show people what is going to be developed on a particular piece of property, the interest that people have in it or their ability to visualize the general zoning or an official plan designation is not there to the same extent and you

just don't have the same kind of interest. So again, this is another area in which the general public basically was going to be excluded.

Now, let me just deal with the reasons why we are against the bill as presented to us for third reading by way of a number of amendments that we had proposed and that were rejected by the government for a variety of reasons. The first one deals with this whole notion of a one-window approach. The one-window approach is something that most of us will agree is the right and proper thing to do. Rather than having seven or eight different ministries deal with the particular matter in their own way, to actually have it funnelled through one particular ministry is time-efficient, certainly from a file management viewpoint, the situation can be handled better etc, but it also has some very inherent difficulties with it.

One of the greatest difficulties that it has is that the legitimate concerns of some of the ministries may very well be finessed in a particular situation. That's why we felt that in order for a one-window approach to properly work, you had to set out the rules and regulations, the protocol as it were, whereby the ministries were going to adhere to how they were going to deal with a particular application or a particular matter before them, so that not only internally the government would know how they were going to look at a particular application or the various ministries were going to look at an application, but so that the general public, the development industry and indeed municipalities would know the rules by which particular applications were going to be judged within particular government departments. That's why we suggested that the government should develop clear, written, publicly available protocols on how the workings of a one-window approach would actually be put into place.

Currently, you could very well have a situation where the concerns of four or five ministries may be satisfied with a particular development. There could be one or two ministries that may have a definite concern about what's going on, and with just the numbers of ministries that you're dealing with etc, it may very well be decided that, "Oh well, we understand your concerns, but we're not going to do anything about it because the government's total position is that this particular development should go ahead." Under the current law, each particular ministry would still be in a position to appeal the matter to the Ontario Municipal Board. That, under the one-window approach, presumably can no longer happen.

1600

I notice from a practical viewpoint, and we heard about this on a number of occasions during the hearings, you do not want five different ministries coming before the Ontario Municipal Board with five different sets of legal counsel and five other staff members to all give a different view of the situation.

I agree there has to be some saving of time to deal with that, but in effect, to try to finesse situations without having the legitimate concerns of a particular ministry brought forward and allowed to be expressed before the Ontario Municipal Board I think in the long run will not allow a particular development—and I'm thinking particularly of major developments—the ability to truly

stand the test of the various critiques that may be made against it.

So we're saying that it's extremely important that, although we agree with the notion of a one-window approach, in order for the process to work fairly and in order to determine that all the legitimate concerns are brought forward, it's extremely important that there be public protocols available as to how different ministries are going to relate to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs with respect to this one-window approach.

That is completely absent in the bill, and the way I understand it, there was never any clear-cut answer given as to how that was going to be dealt with internally. It's our feeling that will lead to compromises that the general public in a lot of situations may not even know about and may be very difficult for them to react to.

We therefore feel that, until those kinds of protocols are made available and until we know what the internal procedures and processes are, the ministries be given the power or that they at least retain the power to appeal on an individual basis.

The second point deals with the whole notion of time frames for public review of planning decisions. I've already indicated that the public referral aspect or the public appeal aspect has been downsized from 30 days to 20 days. As I indicated before, that sounds very significant, but quite frankly, there's nothing there.

One of my favourite questions to the various developers who came before the committee, and also to the municipal planning staff people, dealt with the issue of how long it really takes to get a development plan through. It is not the 90 days or the 120 days or the 180 days that are talked about in the act, that are being changed, that are the significant aspect; in most cases, a major development may take two, three, four, five years to get through.

The developers clearly admitted that if they knew a municipality was dealing with their particular request, and particularly if they knew they were dealing with it in a somewhat favourable fashion, they certainly weren't going to push them very hard in order to get a decision on the matter simply because they had somehow gone beyond the time limit that was allocated in the act.

They all agreed that the real time it takes to get developments through usually deals with the administrative time that matters take to get through planning staff, to get through local councils, the length of time it takes for matters to be approved and looked at by the various ministries of the crown. So the whole question of limiting these times, whether you go from 90 to 60 days or from 180 to 120 days, quite frankly is optics. It looks as if we're doing something, but in the reality of the situation, we're not changing anything at all until we change the internal processes by which we deal with applications, both here within the government system and certainly also at the local government level.

I think it's fair to say that some municipalities across the province have a reputation of getting development proposals through rather quickly, in an expedient fashion, and still looking at all of the various parameters that are necessary in order to look into it. Other municipalities—and all you have to do is talk to the development indus-

try—have a reputation of taking an extremely long period of time in order to adequately deal with them. What I'm saying is that the real problems with respect to getting development approved in this province are not with respect to the time frames as indicated in the act, but rather with the administrative time periods that it takes to get matters resolved or dealt with at both the local and the provincial levels.

The parliamentary assistant has indicated today and also indicated at a number of times during the hearing process that AMO was satisfied and that the requests of AMO to make various changes to the Planning Act were adhered to. There are at least two areas, though, in which the requests of both AMO and others as well were not listened to by the government and were not accepted by way of amendments to the act.

One of them dealt with this whole prematurity test of subdivision plans and proposals. AMO favoured a position—and I'll quote right from the presentation it made to the committee. It states that AMO recommends "that municipalities be given the authority to set out what makes a complete application, either through a municipal bylaw or official plan policies." The time frame for decision on an application should not begin until all this information is received. This is something that the municipalities have been asking for, that it be placed in legislation or that they be allowed to do so by way of bylaw, through the legislation etc. The government refused to do anything about that or write that into the bill. AMO also recommended that the prematurity criterion be retained in the Planning Act. Again, this is an area where AMO was refused.

The next point that I'd like to make deals with a submission that was made by the board of trade here in Toronto, which was a very interesting one. That deals with what we do with buildings that are older than 20 or 40 or 50 years that are non-conforming. The suggestion they made is that currently, in order for them to do anything with those buildings, there are applications necessary to the committee of adjustment etc. The board of trade made a very sensible suggestion that I think would save all of Ontario and all of the municipal departments and the committees of adjustment a lot of time and effort, particularly when in 99% of these cases these applications are approved in any event.

They simply stated, dealing with non-conforming sites, that "in order to significantly reduce the existing workloads of committees of adjustment related to the conformity of older buildings with setback and similar provisions of zoning bylaws, the board suggests that buildings over a specified age"—say, 20 years, but you could say 30 or 40 years, pick whatever number you want—they should be deemed to comply with the bylaw. This would then permit many more additions and alterations to receive building permits without having to obtain committee of adjustment approval for historical variation from zoning bylaws.

Again, this would remove an obstacle to affordable renovations and unburden municipalities of a costly and redundant review process. Non-conforming sites are routinely approved in any event, so rationalizing this regulation would allow all concerned to benefit.

We proposed an amendment to that effect which dealt with non-conforming sites. It proposed that residential buildings—and we were only talking about residential buildings, because I realize full well that there may be different matters at work with respect to commercial and industrial buildings. In other words, these are buildings that have been sitting on the same street in the same condition in the same position for at least the last 20, 30, 40, 50 years. We proposed that residential buildings over a specified age should be deemed to comply with the zoning bylaws. Again, the government rejected that suggestion. We totally concurred with the board of trade on that. That is a situation where a lot of the work that goes currently to the committee of adjustments can simply be dispensed with.

1610

Another issue that came up—and I think probably about a third of the delegations that came before us dealt with this whole issue—is basement apartments. I find that this is a fascinating issue. I know that my friends across the way will accuse our party and individual members of our party of changing our minds on this issue, because I guess this matter got quite an airing by the previous government. Of course, after much public debate—and it's not a very easy situation to deal with, I'll be the first to agree to that—it took the position about three years ago now to allow everyone to have a basement apartment in their residential unit as a right, provided that it could meet with certain building code and fire code regulations. That always should be a proviso; I don't think we should have any units in the province of Ontario that cannot meet fire code regulations. If they can't meet the regulations, then they shouldn't be built or they shouldn't be allowed to exist, because they could be a potential danger and hazard to the people who reside in the units.

I can well imagine the kinds of deliberations that this House went through at the time because, after all, we had about 100,000 illegal apartment units in the province of Ontario. You have three choices, I suppose. You can legalize them all and thereby at least guarantee to the people who live in the units some sense that they can rely on the building code and on the fire code. They can at least now go to the officials if they are legal and say there are certain things wrong if the landlord isn't prepared to fix them etc. I suppose that's the main reason for legalizing them, so that people will no longer live in fear that they can be evicted because they're living in an illegal unit. The other thing that you can do is you can simply keep them illegal and keep the status quo and not do anything with the units at all. I suppose that after much thought and deliberation, it was decided that was not the proper answer to the question because that, in effect, had been the situation, and an unsatisfactory situation, that had existed in the province for a number of years.

So what was done ultimately was that these units were legitimized. They were legalized throughout the province of Ontario and brought into the mainstream of affordable housing. I think most people will agree that most of the basement apartments throughout the entire province are affordable. They're certainly usually at a much lower rent

than, let's say, other rental accommodation in the immediate areas in which those units are located.

I understand that at that point in time our party voted against that, for whatever reason; there may have been good reasons for it. But now it's a right. We now have a situation in this province where it's a right for each property owner to have a basement apartment, provided you can meet the health regulations. That is a right that now exists for each and every one of us who is fortunate enough to own a house and who can meet the relatively minimal criteria that are set out in that act.

So now what's this government doing? This government is saying, "We are taking that right away." They'll be the first to say, "But we're leaving it open to the municipalities." That's not the point. The point is that currently there's a right there to have a basement apartment, either for some additional income for an individual, a young family that might just be buying a unit that can use the income from that unit in order to help it to meet its expenses—its mortgage expenses, its household expenses, its tax bills etc—or in the larger units it's not uncommon for people to have additional units for either in-laws or grandparents to be living with the family. That's all possible now.

What this act is doing is taking that right away. The curious part about this whole situation is this, and I must admit that in the three weeks that we debated this or two and a half weeks that we debated this, it's a thought that I—and I had many discussions with the government members as well on a one-to-one basis in trying to sort of elucidate where did this really come from, this notion of—other than public pressure by some people that they wanted to get rid of this right etc.

But here we have a party that basically can be regarded, of all the three parties that are on the political spectrum in Ontario, as being the property rights party, the party that basically says: "I should be the master in my own castle. I should be allowed to do in my own house what I want to do." So now here we have this party that basically says: "Yes, but you can no longer develop your own individual housing unit, your house, because we're taking that right away. And maybe municipalities will give you that right back or maybe they won't give it back."

It just seems to me that there is such an irony in that, there is such an irony in the fact that the property rights party of Ontario would take the position that you cannot really enjoy your house that you have bought and paid for in the fashion that you want to.

I assume that this comes from certain pressures within the more well-established neighbourhoods in our province, I suppose, where people say: "Well, no, I don't want anybody to have an extra unit in the building beside me. It's all right for downtown where there are already lots of houses or maybe the value of the houses and the value of the neighbourhoods aren't quite along the same lines as to where somebody else may live" etc.

It just seems to me that that's a totally inconsistent position. Plus of course it drives this whole market thing, this whole basement apartment thing, underground once again, and I can guarantee you that in another five or 10 or 15 years the same kind of debate that took place two

or three years ago with respect to legitimizing the 100,000 units that were then illegal will take place once again. You're not solving the problem.

There are many other ways in which you can deal with the situation. We're talking about if you want to set up a certain criterion with respect to building code requirements, with respect to fire code requirements, as I've already indicated, then certainly that is of paramount importance. You can certainly make sure that every unit anybody builds meets those requirements, and I don't think there's anybody who would argue with that, because after all, you want to make sure that whoever lives in these units is well protected. But on the other hand, to take away that right now that people have it is a totally different thing, and it's certainly not something that I can concur with.

I think on that score alone, I would recommend that we vote against this particular bill, because I think it has also added something into the planning process that really deals with a particular situation rather than process. As I indicated before, basically Bill 20 deals with the process as to how you get from point A to point B, and all of a sudden we have this thing about basement apartments thrown in, and I don't know what really drives that. Because the other very interesting thing is that in survey after survey that we were shown, it clearly indicated that anywhere between 60% to 70% of the people of Ontario favour these units, provided that there are regulations in place to make sure that they are safe and that they are approved by the fire code etc.

1620

There's one other issue that I just quickly want to deal with and that deals with the whole notion of mediation of planning appeals at the OMB. I think there were a couple of excellent presentations made in that regard. One of them was made by a Mr Lehman, and he's an individual who works out of Toronto and has been involved, I guess, from anywhere from 2,000 to 4,000 matters that have come before the various committees of adjustment, and also some of them have worked their way up to the OMB. I'll just quote from the Hansard of February 15 what he had to say about the whole mediation process.

You've got to remember that this is not so much a right and wrong situation when you're dealing with planning. You're basically dealing with what is best for the overall community in the long run. How would we like to have this community look five, 10, 15 years from now? So it isn't a question of there being a right or a wrong, but it's more a question of degree; it's more a question as to how we go about it. Rather than having clear-cut winners and losers before the OMB, the way you may have in criminal cases in the court system etc, it's more of a question as to: Will the best kind of development, or non-development in certain situations, result from the overall process?

He stated: "Of the appeals that were mediated over a three-year period, 80% were mediated to the satisfaction of the participants" and not going to the municipal board. It's also interesting to note: "The average cost of the mediation was \$800 to \$1,000, an amount, in my opinion, that is certainly in line with what could be included as an application cost, or certainly in line with what a municipi-

ality, say the city of Toronto, would have no trouble in funding, as opposed to sending their lawyers and staff to an Ontario Municipal Board hearing."

The amendment that we proposed in this area was that it be almost made mandatory that every case, before a full-fledged hearing is held, be mediated before the Ontario Municipal Board. I know that some people will say, "You're really setting up another administrative process," but I think that one of the problems that has arisen with respect to the OMB over the last number of years is that it has become almost like another court. It has set up its own rules and regulations—and it should certainly operate by rules and regulations; as we've seen from some of the events that have taken place in this House, if you don't have rules and regulations then the whole process could run amok quite quickly—but the problem is that with setting up definite rules and regulations and procedural guidelines, which is what's happened at the OMB, and with more and more lawyers getting involved on all sides of the issue—

Interjection: Not lawyers?

Mr Gerretsen: Oh, yes, even lawyers—the notion of the average person coming to the OMB and just wanting to present his or her view about a particular matter is certainly something that has been discouraged over the last number of years. Not discouraged actively by anybody involved in the process, but the process itself discourages people from being involved, because the hearing has become too stylized, too formalized, too much of a courtroom type of proceeding with examinations and cross-examinations etc. It seems to me that a much more appropriate way of dealing with matters, in trying to settle a dispute between parties before it comes before the Ontario Municipal Board, is to do it by way of mediation.

I know that this is basically an administrative matter, although I would certainly like to see it enshrined in law, but this is certainly something that I would recommend that the government take another very hard look at.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): Why don't you tell us about some of the things that you agree with? You're getting a little boring over there. Liven it up a bit.

Mr Gerretsen: I'm glad to see that my friend from Grey county is listening to this, because he is the kind of gentleman, having known him for some period of time and holding him in some respect, but he thinks that the answers to all our problems are very clear-cut and easy and they are not.

We suggested that an amendment be moved to the act that the municipal board use mediation in every case to attempt to resolve matters that are referred or appealed to the board before determining that the manner provided under the act takes place. Unfortunately, this is another amendment that the government was not prepared to support.

What's interesting of course is that the court systems themselves have gone to a much greater alternative dispute mechanism process over the last number of years, and it would seem to me that something that isn't as legalistically based as the court system, such as the hearings before the OMB, which was the way it was originally intended to work, is a perfect avenue to try the

mediation process. Everyone knows that even with the improvement that may have been made at the board over the last number of years, it still takes an awful long time if a matter is referred to the OMB before, in effect, the hearing is held. It takes anywhere from six months to nine months to a year to over a year, and that, to my way of thinking, is unacceptable.

I am a firm believer that people have the right to know where they stand early on in the process and where the different parties stand, and the positions that the different parties in a dispute or in a development proposal are taking. The longer the delays are, quite frankly, the more the consumer ultimately, if the development is to take place, will end up paying for the final product, whether we're talking about a house in a subdivision or whether we're talking about rental accommodation within a commercial development.

I've tried to read some of the main areas that we don't agree with. We think that basically this act is intended for optics. It makes it look as if something is happening and that the time frames are made a lot shorter than they are in reality. We all know that the actual length of time that it takes to get a development through in the province of Ontario has very little to do with the time lines that are set out in either this act or in Bill 163, or in the planning acts before that. A lot of those things have to do more with the internal workings of the various departments.

Mr Murdoch: You're putting everybody to sleep. Stir it up a little, John.

Mr Gerretsen: I'm certainly glad that my friend takes such a great interest in these matters. I also know that he was certainly an interesting member on this committee. We always knew exactly where he was coming from on all of these issues, particularly with the environmental community in Grey county. He had an excellent rapport with them and—

Mr Murdoch: You've only got three minutes, so hurry up.

Mr Gerretsen: Okay. To give you an example about a community, I suppose, that has always been regarded as a community in which development takes place in a very quick and orderly fashion and everybody is happy with what's going on, it's the city of Mississauga.

I found a very interesting article back in the Toronto Sun of January 19, which states: "Mississaugans Upset over Planning Process." It says that they are "frustrated and angered by a planning process that doesn't ask for their opinions soon enough," said a city official.

"Residents turn out by the hundreds at public meetings being held to discuss the official plan, but some residents said the meetings are just window dressing, because much of the work is near completion."

Now, I have no idea as to what's happening in Mississauga, other than the fact that I know it's certainly a community that over the years has developed actively and has had a civic leader there as their mayor who's been very proactive and pro-development. I don't want to judge what's happening in Mississauga, but it's interesting that these kind of comments indicate the frustration that the general public feels with respect to the planning process. It is the overriding mistake that was made in this Bill 20.

1630

I find it very interesting. I can remember during the election campaign of last year that if there was one thing the Tories were going to do when they got elected, they were going to scrap Bill 163. They were going to scrap it. Of course, what they have done is they haven't scrapped it at all. They have basically fine-tuned some of the time frames that are in the act. The other very significant thing that they have done is they have literally taken the policy statement that was made part of Bill 163 and gutted it by coming up with a very weak policy statement that they currently have out for discussion purposes among, apparently, certain groups and certain stakeholders.

As I indicated earlier, one of the major faults with respect to the whole process of the public hearings on Bill 20 deals with the fact that the policy statement was not up for discussion by the committee, and there was group after group that indicated to us that they had some very serious concerns about particularly the environmental matters as stated in the policy statement.

My friend the member for St Catharines will be discussing the environmental issues further a little bit later on, but I think what it really shows is the total flaw in the process. How can you look at an act and the procedural framework that it contains to deal with planning in Ontario without dealing with the policy statements that, in effect, determine what kind of planning will take place, not only in Ontario as a whole but also within the individual communities?

It's a matter that I don't know how other governments have dealt with in the past. It's my understanding that this is sort of the way it's always been done, that when we look at an act we look at process and that the policy statements are something that's within cabinet and ministerial discretion.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have the opportunity to speak on this bill once again. I had the opportunity to serve very briefly on the committee in the final weeks of it, one day in the hearings in the city of Hamilton and the concluding week, when we dealt with various amendments that were brought before the committee for consideration.

I personally am not in favour of this act and have never been in favour of this act, even though I think there are some components of it that can be supported. I think in any piece of legislation it's unusual if there aren't at least some components that are very helpful.

The Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is here this afternoon, a long-time friend of mine, and I have implored him on many occasions, and I know he's given a sympathetic ear to this, to ensure that we preserve agricultural land and, more importantly, the farmers who reside on that agricultural land. One of the themes that I have dealt with in my remarks on amendments to the Planning Act revolves around the whole issue of the preservation of agricultural land, because I have seen much of it disappear over a period of time since I've been in this Legislature. I note it most in the Niagara Peninsula because I have travelled between St Catharines and the city of Toronto for the past 19 years, and I cannot say that what I see happening is progress. In some cases it is; in some cases it is not.

What we have happening in many of the communities which are outside of Toronto is the construction of what we call bedroom communities for Metropolitan Toronto. In other words, they are places for people to reside who actually work in Toronto and who are oriented mostly to what's going on in the city of Toronto. We're seeing some of this take place in the Niagara Peninsula.

Where there is growth that takes place within a community to serve the needs of that individual community, that is understandable. So when we have development in St Catharines or Niagara Falls or Fort Erie or Port Colborne or other areas in the Niagara region that has to do with growth of jobs or growth of employment opportunities in those areas, it's understandable that we would seek corresponding growth in terms of new subdivisions and new developments of all kinds.

But what we are seeing essentially, and I know I annoy some of my friends in the Niagara Peninsula when I say this, is housing constructed essentially for people who live in Toronto, not for people who live in those communities. So the net benefit to that community is rather limited. There is a benefit for the community when the construction actually takes place. The benefit leaves when you see some of the services that are required.

I look at some of the very small municipalities which, on good agricultural land, although it is zoned and designated for it, are constructing new housing developments. Then, as an opposition member, I get called out by the people who have children in the area and say, "Well, of course Senator Gibson school in Beamsville needs an expansion." Why does it need an expansion? It needs an expansion because that municipality has development. Is that development there to serve the needs of that individual municipality? No, it's largely there to serve the needs of commuters who want to live there because the cost of housing is lower—and I understand that, I appreciate that—but who work in Hamilton or often Metropolitan Toronto or the greater Toronto area. So there's not a benefit there, and at the same time we're taking good agricultural land out of use.

The unique thing about the Niagara Peninsula, particularly the northern part, is that not only are the soils conducive to the growing of tender fruit and other products, but the climatic conditions are quite different, and that's more important. I think the Minister of Agriculture would agree with me that that's even more of a compelling reason. Below the escarpment, as we would say, or north of the escarpment—I remember in a grade 13 geography class learning this—there were on the average 27 more growing days below the escarpment than above the escarpment. That's quite remarkable, actually, when you think of that as a line of delineation for climatic purposes as well as other purposes. So when I see development taking place on those lands, development which is geared to serving Metropolitan Toronto rather than those communities alone, I become concerned.

As I say, having travelled this area for the past 19 years, I well recall when you could travel from Toronto to St Catharines and see the lush orchards which were there. Today I see so very often—and again, the people who own these aren't going to be happy with my saying it—some of the warehousing that's along the highway. I

know that good economics is supposed to dictate that you put warehouses and service buildings along the highway, but I'll tell you, it certainly does not attract people to the Niagara Peninsula any more.

When I see Stoney Creek being eaten up with development—and some parts of Stoney Creek should be developed. There has to be that; I don't deny that—but when I see the lovely agricultural land, the attraction of the Niagara Peninsula, being taken up with so much development, I don't consider that to be progress.

I know the Minister of Agriculture has spoken on many occasions about the importance of the agriculture industry. I happen to think that we in this province, or at least some people in the province, do not look upon the agriculture industry as so important an industry as they should, and it is important. The minister will tell you and others who are interested in and involved in agriculture will tell you that in fact there are millions and billions of dollars that are derived from the production of fruit and production of other food, animals and so on, that really contribute extensively to this province.

I know, for instance, that at Algoma in Sault Ste Marie they had a problem there with a plant that might have gone out of operation. The government rushed quickly, and I thought justifiably, to assist in maintaining that operation. There was some downsizing, there was some rationalization, there were some concessions that were made both by management and by the employees and the representative of the employees. There was some assistance from the provincial government. But in my view, and it's not a view shared by everybody, I thought that what emerged from that was good for Sault Ste Marie and good for Ontario.

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The reason I use that particular point is because when a crisis happens in agriculture, because it's spread so far across the province and it's not in one town, it's not in one community, we tend not to look upon it as an important crisis, as it would be when a major plant is closing.

So I believe the agriculture industry is important. There isn't a boundless amount of land available. I know people like to say Canada is a large land. Well, tell me how much food you can grow north of Sudbury, for instance. There's not a lot of food that you're going to grow there, because the climatic conditions are not conducive to it. You have some good potato farming in the Sudbury area, some other things do grow, but by and large there's a strip of land along the border between Canada and the United States which is conducive to farming.

I think we have had a good history in this province of capable farmers. We've been good in the production of food. People from the Communist countries, who were never as successful as we have been, often came to Canada to see why we were successful in the production of food. Part of it was our economic system, part of it was our political system and part of it was simply the knowhow of those who had farms and owned those farms themselves as opposed to having the state own the farms, and they had a contribution to make to that.

But what I'm seeing happening now is more and more development in the Niagara Peninsula and in the periphery of Toronto, in areas where the farm land is good and where simply it's nice to have some agricultural area, or rural area, I should say, as opposed to necessarily agricultural, to give you—it's an intangible—some peace of mind. When you go down through Halton Hills and places like that, Campbellford and so on, what a nice trail to go down when you miss the turnoff at Highway 403 for some reason and you're compelled to come down the Guelph Line. We're always too busy wanting to rush from one place to another. What a treat it is to come down Guelph Line or one of the other lines that come through that agricultural area and that rural area.

I hope it will not happen that we'll continue to lose these lands, but I see in this bill the possibility that with the loosening of environmental regulations, with less consideration being given to wetlands, which are so important to our environment, with less consideration given to agricultural land, with less consideration given to all of the environmental aspects, we're going to have a diminished quality of life in Ontario. It's a quality of life that has been built up over the years.

Speaking on a planning issue, I couldn't speak without talking about the Niagara Escarpment Commission, particularly with my good friend the member for Carleton, Norm Sterling, if I may use his name—we're not supposed to. He is a good friend of mine and has been a long-time colleague, came into the Legislature at the same time, now Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. I wish in this specific case that the Niagara Escarpment Commission were under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations, because I know of the very hard work that he did in helping to establish the Niagara Escarpment Commission and the Niagara Escarpment plan. Again, that is something that a Conservative government did in the past. I've said on occasions I like to be fair to people and compliment them on what they've done in years gone by if it is something that's positive for the province. I want to give Premier Davis and Minister Sterling the greatest of credit in this regard and others.

My fear is that with the loosening of the environmental regulations in Bill 20, the planning act, much of what Mr Sterling was trying to build in this province in terms of a wonderful setting for people, an internationally acclaimed area being protected, will be diminished, that we'll start seeing the kind of development we shouldn't see on those lands because of the pressures coming on them.

Now, I have read from time to time—and this is why I was sorry that one of the cuts that's being made in services to the assembly involves the newspapers from the various small towns, because that's where you really find out when the government members are saying something where they don't think the big-city people will find out that they're saying it. So I pick up a newspaper from Wellandport and I read my good friend the member for Lincoln saying that the Niagara Escarpment Commission is as good as gone, and the Owen Sound Sun Times quoting the member for Grey-Owen Sound, Mr Murdoch, as saying that the minister says he's going to be happy with what she is going to do with the Niagara Escarpment Commission.

Fortunately, we have a minister with considerable clout and power in the cabinet who is committed to it: the member for Carleton. I know that with his reputation on the line, he will do as much as possible to ensure that this is preserved. But the provisions of Bill 26 certainly will not help him in this task—I was trying to pronounce "Herculean," but I can't—this Hercules-like task he has. It's too hard for me to say because it's in the middle of the afternoon and I have a cold.

Anyway, now that I've paid tribute to the Minister of Agriculture, the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations and all the good things that some of the Conservative governments have done in the past, I must go on to other provisions of the bill and tell you why I think there are problems.

Mr Hardeman, the member for Oxford, carried the bill in committee and went around the province to listen to what people had to say. There were some changes made to the bill, not many, but I want to thank him for a couple of changes that I thought made the bill more responsive to the needs of the general public.

What was most unfortunate was that the member for Middlesex, Mr Smith, sat on the committee. I want to tell you why that was unfortunate, that there's something wrong with our system of government. The member for Middlesex, I believe, in his previous incarnation was a planner in the city of London. Here's a person with some considerable expertise, and I wasn't being mischievous in committee—I can't say I'm that way all the time—when I kept wanting to get his opinion specifically on whether the time lines contained in this bill could really be met by a municipality. Unfortunately, the cat had his tongue, for some reason. I know how this happens. I've been in government and opposition. What usually happens is that somebody in the government says: "You shouldn't be speaking on this in an independent way. You cannot contradict the parliamentary assistant, who is carrying the bill."

That's most unfortunate for those of us in this House, because there are some people who come from a background where that would be very helpful. I suspect that almost any government in power would want the parliamentary assistant to be the official spokesperson and would not encourage the other person to speak out, but that's what we lose. The committee system, it seems to me, should be a little more flexible, because we lost that opportunity. If the member for Middlesex had said, "Actually, in my professional opinion as a planner, I think these time lines are reasonable," I might have been more accepting of what the government was doing, because I respect a person's professional opinion regardless of what happens. I'd be interested in that, and I would hope that members of the government don't get to their members and say, "You shouldn't really say what would be contradictory to the bill." But during committee I regretted that, because I think he could have made a contribution.

I happen to think the new time lines are unrealistic. One of the differences between this government and the previous Conservative government, in my view, is that this government is much less practical and far more ideological. In other words, there was an ideological

commitment to keep that you must downsize, that you must speed up regardless of whether it can be done or not.

I'll tell you why I don't think it can be done. I think it cannot be done because at the same time that we're asking municipalities and the provincial government to process applications from the development industry more quickly, we are cutting staff in municipalities, staff in various departments which must deal with these, staff in the various boards of education, in such organizations as the conservation authorities. Because there is less staff available to deal with these, either they're going to get a nod and a wink and not the kind of scrutiny they should, with long-term environmental implications that could be costly to the taxpayer in the long term, or we're going to have to change those time lines back. They simply cannot be met, in my view, by a shrunken staff. I see that as a very significant problem.

1650

When we met in Hamilton, the people who were against it were largely—we had people from the federation of naturalists, we had people from community organizations; we had a number of people who appeared who were in opposition to it. Essentially, the only group I can recall that was in favour of it was developers. I understand why the developers would be in favour. If I were a developer, I might say it's quite attractive to see a reduction of the environmental regulations, quite attractive to see what I would consider to be better time lines in dealing with this.

But I don't think it's going to be better, even for them, in the long run. You've made a significant change, and maybe it depends, on the part of the province and your own philosophy, whether you think this is reasonable, but it's the decision of whether it should say "be consistent with" or "have regard to" in terms of the provincial policy statements that apply to planning at the local level.

Previously, in the legislation that existed, it said "be consistent with." I happen to agree with that because I think there's better protection for the general environment if that were the case. But there's a second reason, and I think the people in the development industry and municipalities should be aware of this. You're going to have far more arguments taking place before the OMB and before other bodies and in negotiations using the terminology "have regard for," because it's less definite, less definitive, and for that reason I can see many debates taking place over exactly what that means. "Be consistent with" is far more definitive and I think superior in terms of protecting the environment.

One of my other concerns was that the policy statements the province is developing are not finalized at this time. There have been some discussions about them but we have not seen a finalized form. I happen to believe that this bill should not have been dealt with until such time as those policy statements were completed, with appropriate input from all segments of the population.

I know that in addition to the development industry in general—I'm not saying everybody, but the development industry in general—some municipalities and some municipal politicians are in favour of this bill. Part of the reason is that some local municipalities like to have the

opportunity to make decisions they feel are within the purview of their own municipality. I happen to think that while it is true that local input is very useful, when it comes to controversial items it's much more difficult for local politicians to resist the pressure of those proposing a development than it is for those at the provincial level. That's regardless, in my view, of which party happens to be in power. They're more objective at the provincial level. They are less likely to be influenced, because it's not somebody's friend you're granting the severance to or not somebody's friend you're doing a special favour for. It's difficult at the local level for people to be able to resist those pressures.

If I were sitting on a municipal council and a good friend came up and said, "I need this severance" or "I need this special consideration," sure I'm going to turn it down, because that's my nature, but that pressure is very difficult. That's very difficult for local politicians to deal with.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): If he was a Canadiens fan.

Mr Murdoch: If he was for the Montreal Canadiens, he'd be all right.

Mr Bradley: My friend the member for Grey-Owen Sound interjects in a standing position. I know that's illegal to say, but I was relatively nice to him in committee and didn't pick too many fights with him in this regard. I didn't even mention his good friend Michael Valpy, the columnist with the Globe and Mail, who has written so many glowing tributes to the planning initiatives that were under the auspices of my friend the member for Grey-Owen Sound. I was kind enough, Bill, not to do that.

I also want to deal with lot levies. I know that some of the people don't like lot levies. If you're in the building industry, you're not going to like them, because you want to be able to provide a product you can sell at a price where it can be sold and you also want to make a reasonable profit. I understand that, and that's good for the business and that's what we want to see, but the change that's taking place is perhaps a bit subtle; nevertheless it has important ramifications for the province.

Lot levies, as we know, pay for such things as new sewers, roads, garbage collection facilities, police stations, cruisers, parks and recreation centres. The present Minister of Municipal Affairs—I wish him well in his bout with ill health at this time; if he's watching his television set I want to pass along my very best wishes for a very quick recovery to the minister—wants to have lot levies, I am told, for only hard services. That's essentially roads, sewers and garbage disposal. Everything else the municipality will have to pay for out of taxes. When you have new development, there are costs far beyond those hard services: There are the softer services which I've described; there are new needs in the field of education; there are new recreational needs; there are needs of expansion of libraries or for special libraries.

I know that it's attractive to have development, because municipal politicians often believe that the new amount of money they're going to get in taxes, the new assessment, is going to be beneficial. I have a paper

which was done by Dr Joseph Kushner of Brock University. I've described him on many occasions as a very small-c conservative individual who has probably voted Conservative more than anything else. Probably not last time, but he doesn't tell me how he votes.

He has put out a paper called *The Effect of Urban Growth on Municipal Taxes*. I won't read it word for word, because it is a very technical document by an economist. Essentially, he comes to the conclusion in this very detailed study that there is very little benefit, in fact sometimes no benefit at all, or a detriment in terms of taxes gained over expenditures needed with new development in municipalities, particularly with new residential and commercial development, although some industrial development can produce for a municipality some additional funds which can be helpful to the community.

For many people in municipal politics the word "grow" is extremely important, the word "expand" is extremely important, and unfortunately in many cases we measure the so-called progress by how much expansion and how much growth and how much development take place. We all know there's a need for some development, particularly for redevelopment and improving the community, as we go along, but I'm not convinced that this bill is going to help us in terms of good planning processes in Ontario.

We have reduced consultation with the public as a result of this. I understand the problem. I sat on a municipal council, and it would drive members of the municipal council around the bend to watch one person with an idiosyncrasy of some kind hold up a development forever that was really accepted by the whole community. That we didn't want to see, and I understand when we want to sidestep that kind of circumstance arising, but I believe that the government, although reinserted to a certain extent, has taken away some of the opportunities for input by the public.

Let me tell you why it's important to have that. If you make an environmental mistake at the beginning, you pay a huge price later on. That's for instances where we allow development to take place near an old garbage dump, and everyone thinks: "Well, isn't this good. The dump is gone. The land is covered. There's no problem." There's methane gas which is produced. In the Kitchener-Waterloo area, for instance, they had a problem with an explosion from an old dump site adjacent to a housing development. I have seen other cases, when I was Minister of the Environment, where mistakes were made years ago that the taxpayers of the province had to pay for subsequently. That's why I think it's important to deal with the environmental considerations early on.

The hearings I thought were very good, listening to how some people were bringing forward their concerns—naturalists, as I say, out there; preservationists; conservationists. That's very close to the word "conservative"; preserving and conserving used to be an important part of the mandate of the governments in years gone by, and I get concerned when I see that leaving.

1700

Another problem associated with Bill 20 is Bill 26 and some of the powers that flow from Bill 26 as well, but I've had a chance to speak extensively on Bill 26, so I

don't want to go into the details of that again, except we all know that one of the problems with Bill 26 was that unlike this bill—and I will say this about this bill: it dealt with the Planning Act of Ontario. What was wrong with Bill 26 was that it was an omnibus bill that included measures affecting municipalities but certainly included a lot of other items about 47 different acts.

One of the concerns I have is about amalgamations taking place and how they're going to take place. The city of London, for instance, had an amalgamation with Middlesex. In Middlesex there was a problem with an adjacent township in the area. At least a bill had to come before this House, and there was a good debate in this House on it and there were public hearings on it. The changes that I'm seeing are going to mean this Legislature is going to have to deal with far fewer of those. Those deals can be made locally and often not to the satisfaction of all parties concerned. There's not an adjudicating body, such as the Legislative Assembly, with more objectivity to deal with these matters.

Another problem I see, and it gets back to why we don't have enough staff, is the tax cut. I know the members were wondering when I was going to deal with the tax cut and how it affects this bill.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: It was really never a problem when the Liberals were in power. No cuts; 65 increases.

Mr Bradley: I well recall the 172 tax increases and fee increases under the Conservative government. I don't mention those because I know they were raising those taxes at the time for the purpose of trying to provide good programs in this province. I don't criticize the government for those kinds of tax increases that they put forward as the Progressive Conservatives in the past. They were obviously supported by some of the members here.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): That's since Confederation.

Mr Bradley: No, that's the period of time in which you were in power, your government was in power. I shouldn't answer interjections; the Speaker will tell me that.

What's happening is that Bill 26 and the tax cut are tied in with this bill, because what they're doing is forcing municipalities to either raise municipal taxes or raise service fees at the local level. Those do not take into account the municipalities' ability to pay. The other option is that they have to cut staff at the local level, staff who are going to be required under this legislation to deal with development proposals at a much more rapid rate than previously was the case.

So the province gets its credit. It cuts its provincial income tax—the most progressive tax, by the way, the one that takes into account a person's ability to pay, the one that really says that if you make a lot more money, you pay a lot more taxes; that's the one that's being cut, the most progressive tax—in order to force municipalities to raise the most regressive tax—the municipal property tax—and those service fees, service charges. As I say, both do not take into account the ability of the individual to pay.

Because of that, we're seeing municipalities scrambling. They're laying off staff left and right. It seems to me

that in the planning department, the engineering department, the parks and recreation department, for instance, none of them is going to be able to deal with development proposals at the speed which is countenanced in this legislation, because of all of those cutbacks.

Of course, we know that in order to implement the tax cut, the government is going to have to borrow over \$20 billion over its mandate. Now to my Conservative friends who may say, "I'm not so worried about the cuts, but you mean to tell me they're going to borrow this money, they don't have it already?" I have to say, "I'm afraid so." They actually have to borrow over \$20 billion, add something like \$30 billion more to the debt during their term of office, just so they can give a tax cut that largely is going to benefit rich people and is going to force municipalities to cut staff who would be needed to implement this bill.

You ask, "Where are you getting these figures?" I'm getting them right here, in a document known as the Common Sense Revolution. They're right in here. I'm looking at a table which says, "Common Sense Revolution Projections to Fiscal Year 2000-01." It's all in there, that they're going to have to borrow over \$20 billion to give this tax cut.

I understand now why the member for Wellington—and I remember his predecessor, a good friend of mine, Jack Johnson—the present member for Wellington, Ted Arnott, has said it's reckless. I saw that in the paper. I've often been impressed with some of the arguments that the member for Wellington has put forward in this Legislature, particularly this argument. I understand that he has sent a letter to the Premier where he says the tax cut is reckless, and I agree. The member for Etobicoke West, the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore and the member for Grey-Owen Sound, with whom I disagree on some occasions, have all said, "Should we be proceeding with this tax cut?"

I think one of the reasons they're wondering that is that they're wondering whether municipalities, if we proceed with this tax cut, are going to be able to have the staff necessary to deal with these applications. There's a great complaint against the Niagara Escarpment Commission that it takes too long to deal with items. What was the solution that the government came forward with? The government is cutting staff. I think they cut six out of seven planners in the Niagara area from the Niagara Escarpment Commission. If you want to process the applications more quickly, with extensive consideration of the applications, it seems to me you have to have the appropriate staff to do it. But as you can see, all of this comes in together, all of this ties in together when we look at the implications of Bill 20.

There were several amendments put forward—I don't think I can recall any that were accepted—from the environmental community or the opposition. If there were, they were ones which the government was bringing forward itself, some minor ones.

Ms Churley: None.

Mr Bradley: "None," says the member for Riverdale, and who am I to question her accuracy on this item? She says there were none accepted. That's unfortunate, because there's this theory out there that somehow, once

we go through the hearing process, people will have an opportunity to introduce amendments and they'll be seriously considered. As usual, the parliamentary assistant had his marching orders from the government. I know that's how it works. I'm not personally attacking the parliamentary assistant; it's not his fault. But that's what happens. They tell the parliamentary assistant, "You can't accept any changes of any significance to this legislation." I think the legislation could have been improved considerably.

The government has a majority and it's going to be able to pass anything. That's the result of the election, and in a democratic system we accept the way that an election goes. I know there are those who say the government got only 45% of the vote and so on. It doesn't matter. The system under which we ran was a system that we all ran under and we all know the rules under. So the government was elected.

That means then that it really takes something extra on the part of the government, in a majority position, knowing that it can get anything it wants through, to listen more assiduously to the arguments that are put forward by the opposition and people who are not always applauding the government. But unfortunately there were very few changes made to this legislation, and as a result I think we have a much weakened environmental regime.

Let me tell you why else I'm fearful of this: The government is cutting so drastically and so quickly that we are losing resources and staff in various ministries. The Minister of Agriculture is here. I won't ask him to comment; his job is to defend government policy, and I accept that. But I lament when I hear some of the Tory backbenchers—I was reading the newspaper the other day, so I can quote it, the St Catharines Standard. I was reading where the member for St Catharines-Brock, my good friend Tom Froese, and the member for Lincoln, Mr Sheehan, were both—I think they both signed the letter to the Minister of Agriculture or the Premier or somebody saying they wanted to see the promise kept that there would not be cuts in the Ministry of Agriculture.

1710

Let me tell you why it's important that the Minister of Agriculture and the ministry have that staff available, and I'm trying to help him out with this today, as I always try to help him out. It is because their people have to play a role in the planning process. If the Ministry of Agriculture doesn't have the staff available to be commenting on proposals that are coming forward that would impact agricultural land, then my fear is that the development will take place without that kind of extra consideration that's needed.

The same can be said for the Ministry of Environment. If the Ministry of Environment is drastically cutting staff, is drastically cutting resources, has a huge budget reduction all at once, then what is happening is that we have far more care and consideration of the overall environment in this province.

I know there's a feeling out there that just because we're into a situation where environment isn't first on the list—it's not the headlines in the newspaper, it's not the first story on the 6 o'clock news, it's not featured often by magazines—that somehow it is pushed into the

background. But if you scrape the surface, you will find that people of all political affiliations have a real belief that we must protect the environment. I think the Ministry of Agriculture and Food has played a role in that in years gone by, as directly have the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Natural Resources and other ministries.

With this, I see another aspect of it that was very bad, in my view. The only ministry that can appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board is the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Having been in government and having observed government in years gone by, if you ask me to believe that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing is going to present the case of the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Ministry of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation or the Ministry of Environment as eloquently, as thoroughly, as comprehensively and as competently as those ministries, I certainly cannot believe that's the case. I believe there's a real danger in only the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, which is largely interested in development by its very nature, having all of that power and excluding the Ministry of Agriculture and others from that kind of direct appeal. I have seen in the past some very good representations made by the ministries of agriculture and food, environment, natural resources and culture when there have been significant cases before the OMB.

People will say, "Well, don't you want a cohesive government position?" While there's a lot of virtue to that politically, I'm not convinced, in the quality of life that we're looking for, that a cohesive government policy in an OMB hearing is necessarily a virtue. In fact, I like the freedom of individual ministries to be able to state their case and then allow an objective body such as the OMB to make its final judgement.

So I think this bill, Bill 20, which could have been a step forward, is in fact a step backward. Here's a comment from Kathleen Cooper, who is a researcher who specializes in planning issues for the Canadian Environmental Law Association: "This takes us back to the 1950s.... What this proposed set of rules invites is more sprawl, more money spent on sewers and other infrastructure we can no longer afford, more traffic, more smog, and the continued loss of whatever natural heritage areas we have left."

I'll have to drink some water so I can continue this. I always have a cold when I'm doing this.

David Brown, director of Brock University's Environmental Policy Institute, said he sees "the new rules as another step the province has taken to weaken many of the environmental protection laws that have been put in place over the past 20 years." Notice he didn't just say the NDP years, the Liberal years. He said "the past 20 years," which included some of the more progressive elements of the Progressive Conservative Party when indeed the word "Progressive" was meaningful in the term "Progressive Conservative" describing the party.

Mr Brown said, "Too much of Niagara's rural landscape has already been lost and the loss of more would further degrade the environment and could also hurt the local economy by making the area a less attractive place to live and do business." The NDP legislation, which was opposed by many of the province's developers, although

it was based on a pretty good consensus, "forbid development in areas designed as prime agricultural and environmentally sensitive land and made it harder to build on lands adjacent to those areas. In Niagara, where I'm from, such areas include large tracts of the Niagara Escarpment, lands around significant watercourses and marshes like those near the mouth of the Twenty Mile Creek and Jordan Harbour and lands zoned agricultural in the fruit belt."

The Minister of Agriculture would be interested in this. One of the best presentations made was by the Christian Farmers Federation. A very thoughtful document was presented. I didn't agree with everything in it by any means, but I thought a lot of what they presented really made a lot of sense. They got into the issue of severances, and the minister knows my view on the proposal for a much easier severance policy in the Niagara Peninsula.

I happen to know that there are farmers in the other parts of the province who look upon that proposal with some disdain and would hope that the Minister of Agriculture wouldn't necessarily grant those, and so far he hasn't, and I want to give him credit. I had to defend him the other day. Some people were in to see me who don't agree with my position and were blaming me for influencing the Minister of Agriculture, if you could ever believe that. But I happen to believe that his cautious, conservative stance in that instance is a very useful one.

If I had the time under the new rules of the House—I don't have the time to go on at some length as I might. At one time you could speak without any restrictions on the time, and I had several more documents I wanted to read into the record but I can't do that.

Let me capsulize by simply saying that this is another back-to-the-future document by this government. It is a retrograde step. It is one that will have detrimental long-term environmental consequences for this province and it will simply set us back several years in terms of the planning process, and I implore the government not to proceed with third reading.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Questions or comments?

Ms Churley: I would like to thank and congratulate—and I don't often do this—the Liberal member for St Catharines on his remarks. The member for St Catharines did join us at our committee hearings on several occasions and joined in with me, certainly not with the Tories, on talking about the importance of environmental protection.

One of the things that I get accused of from time to time is that I am a city person and don't understand development and therefore my voice somehow isn't quite legitimate, even though I did sit on Toronto city council at one time and, believe me, ran afoul of some developers. In fact that's how I got elected, in some ways, fighting some terrible development that we all know about that was happening at Harbourfront in the city of Toronto.

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The reason I like to hear from the member, coming back to the member for St Catharines, however, is that he is from the Niagara region and he talks, far more eloquently than I can and than can many people in this

room, about the importance of protecting this very valuable farm land. His voice should be listened to because he's quite right when he says there is not a lot of this very valuable farm land within the boundaries of Ontario and that he has been seeing over the years this very delicate fruit land being developed and that he is expressing fears that this Bill 20 is going to contribute to unfettered development in that area. That's a major concern that we should all—

Interjection.

Ms Churley: I see that the Minister of Agriculture is here, and I would ask him to listen to Mr Bradley and appeal to his caucus at this very last minute to try to make some amendments.

Mr Baird: I listened with great interest to the speech of my colleague the member for Kingston and The Islands in the first part of the official opposition's 90-minute leadoff. It was interesting. He talked about how there was no public consultation of this bill, none whatsoever. Then he was reminded that, yes, the committee went for three weeks around the province of Ontario listening to the public, there were groups for and against, and a lot of individuals came out to express their strong concerns to the committee. And, yes, even he acknowledged that the government listened, referring to the issue of referring minor variances to the Ontario Municipal Board. At the committee, the government members were there, and we listened and always were pleased to receive input from the public.

I also noted in my colleague's speech that he spoke about the one-window approach and expressed concern about it. I remember him speaking on the one-window approach during committee. At that time he said, "I personally like this notion of it going through one particular ministry, because if you phone somebody here in Toronto within government, at least you'd have somebody to contact, rather than having to contact 15 or 20 different people in different ministries about this." I would very much agree with him. I agreed with him in committee when he said it. He went on to say: "Your notion of the one-window approach, as contained in this act, is certainly something that I think most people can relate to, because at least you would know which ministry is the lead ministry," which I couldn't agree more with my friend from Kingston and The Islands on.

After hearing his great speech here in this place, I was left with the thought: Is he going to vote for it or against it? I sat through many hours, many days of hearings. I know my colleagues in the New Democratic Party took a position against the bill, and I'm looking forward to the vote to find out how my friend in the Liberal Party will be voting on this bill.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): In support with my colleagues from St Catharines and Kingston and The Islands, I'll have to say that the time frame is unacceptable. When I say unacceptable, it's because the small municipalities just won't be able to meet the time frame established in this bill.

I'm thinking of the rural municipalities which don't have the resources at the time to meet those deadlines. This will result in having to hire a consultant, and all the way through we could see that this bill is meant to give

additional work to the consultant. But in turn, really, the consultant, especially in a small rural area, doesn't know the area, and with the time frame that is within this Bill 20, even the staff or the people from the municipality won't be able to work with the consultant, and the zoning amendment or the planning amendment will not really meet the needs of the municipalities.

I'm just thinking also of the region of Sudbury. In this bill we don't address the concern of those people, the concern of the village of Noëlville. I remember this chap came up to see us. He said he had 360 acres of farm land. He was not able to sever any land, and this bill will not permit this gentleman from Sudbury.

Going back to the time frame, the city of Gloucester, the county of Oxford and the city of London all say it's impossible to meet the time frame, and this will mean additional cost to all those municipalities to proceed with the requirements of the developers.

Mr Bisson: Just quickly in regard to my friend from Niagara Falls and the point that he makes about moving to the one-window approach and how the government sees this as a wonderful means to be able to streamline the whole process of planning, I just want to echo something that he said in those comments, which is, the government is in the middle of the process of cutting drastically the budgets to all of the provincial ministries in the government of Ontario, and included in that is the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

The member for St Catharines, I should say, not Niagara Falls, makes a very, very good point. At the very time that the government is going to be cutting those budgets for the ministry—that means to say they're not going to have the staff to be able to respond to all of the requests coming forward—they're making the Ministry of Municipal Affairs the only ministry in the government of Ontario that can bring an appeal forward to the OMB.

Presently, under Bill 163, as it was prior to 163, various ministries that had provincial policies that touched on planning had the ability to monitor what was happening in regard to a particular development, but secondly, if there was a concern, they were able to bring an objection forward to the OMB. I think we can agree on all sides of the House, within all three parties, that we need to figure out a way to make sure the objections are based on sound provincial policies in regard to not trying to obstruct development just for that sake. But for the questions of policy, when the government is coming back and is cutting the budget of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs as drastically as it is, which means to say they're going to have far fewer civil servants to be able to do the job of reviewing the applications that come before it and the work that's going to go before the OMB, I would say you're really going to get yourself into a lot of trouble in the longer run because the ministry will not be able to respond to what goes on in regard to planning in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Kingston and The Islands, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr Gerretsen: First of all, I'd like to thank my colleague for taking half the time. He always deals very eloquently with environmental matters and agricultural matters, as he did again today. I'd also like to thank the

members for Nepean, Riverdale, Cochrane South and Prescott-Russell for their comments as well.

Ms Churley: What about Riverdale?

Mr Gerretsen: I did say Riverdale.

It's unfortunate, once again, that the member for Nepean simply wasn't listening to the words of wisdom and eloquence that came from this side of the House, because I made it quite clear in my opening statement that we would not be supporting this bill. I outlined 10 reasonable amendments that were put forward by our party that were not accepted by the government for voting against the bill. One of them deals with this whole notion of a one-window approach. No question about it, a one-window approach is the way to go, but what's happened here is we've seen maybe one fifth of the total thing that is involved to make that happen, without seeing the other four fifths.

It's all right in legislation to set out a process by saying the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing will be in charge and everybody else will be reporting through it. The problem is, as I made quite clear in my remarks, that the public, the development community, the municipalities, all of the various actors and players in the development business, in the development and planning process, have to know what the protocols are between the various ministries, how it's going to operate and how this one particular ministry is going to take charge. That's lacking, and therefore we cannot support the bill.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bisson: I would ask for unanimous consent that I take the balance of the day today and the remainder goes to the critic of the environment tomorrow. So there'd be approximately 30 minutes for me and whatever is left at the end for the critic tomorrow.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? Agreed.

Mr Bisson: I'm going to try to move through this fairly quickly in 30 minutes. I think to properly do the justice that is needed to be done in this whole debate in regard to what's happening to the planning process of Ontario—quite frankly, you can't do in 30 minutes. I'll try to go through it as quickly as possible and try to put together the scenario so that people back home who are watching really understand what is going on here in the province of Ontario today.

First of all, let's turn back to pre-163. Just so people know what we're talking about, under the NDP government, back in 1994-95, the NDP government changed the planning process in Ontario under a bill that was called Bill 163, and that bill did a number of things. We'll talk about that later. But prior to Bill 163, planning in this province was governed as per the Planning Act of the day. The Planning Act of the day, quite frankly, didn't adequately reflect a number of issues of sound management when it comes to planning in the province of Ontario when it came to two or three different points primarily.

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The first point was that the act in itself tended to be fairly bureaucratic. I think we all agree—the Conservatives, the New Democrats and the Liberals—that the original Planning Act, as it stood prior to the NDP changes made under Bill 163, was quite slow and rigor-

ous on a number of occasions. People trying to make amendments to official plans in municipalities or changes to plans to subdivisions or even trying to move forward with a motion in regard to a minor variance really had a difficult time trying to move that application forward through the process of planning, and through the process of approval more so, to finally getting an application approved in the end. Everybody agreed that something had to be done. That was the situation pre-Bill 163.

The other thing, quite frankly, was that the original Planning Act did not adequately deal with proper planning as good principles of planning and how we applied planning in the province of Ontario. The developments that have happened over the years in regard to how we can do better planning were not reflected in the old act. For an example, under the old act there was very much an encouragement of urban sprawl.

We know, for an example, that if you allow development just to go on willy-nilly, without any good, sound provincial policies and any sound planning process, what you end up with in the end is really an increased cost to the municipality when it comes to the amount of taxes that the taxpayers have to pay, because if you don't properly plan for how you're going to do your planning when it comes to development in the province, it makes it rather difficult for costs to be contained over a period of time.

Interjections.

Mr Bisson: I wonder, Mr Speaker, if we could have some order. It is really getting a little—Mr Speaker? I wonder if you can try to—

The Acting Speaker: Would you take your seat, please. There are too many discussions going on. I have difficulty hearing the debate. I would ask you to please refrain from entertaining any discussions.

Mr Bisson: As I was saying, improper planning in regard to what was allowed to happen under the old Planning Act prior to Bill 163, the NDP changes to the Planning Act, really added to poor planning that cost municipalities money in the long run. For an example, if we allow urban sprawl to happen without any good planning principles, the Minister of Transportation, who is listening to this debate, would well know that the question of transit and the question of transportation cannot be adequately dealt with.

It was a feeling within the province with planners, developers, municipal aldermen and mayors across the province, along with people in the ministry, that something needed to be done to take a look at how we deal with planning, so that we're able, over a longer period of time, as a province, to make sure that we look at quality-of-life issues as we do planning, at development in our communities, and, number two, we're able to plan in such a way that we can look down the road and look into the future as to how we can do planning so that it costs the taxpayers less money over a longer period of time.

I would just like to read an article that appeared in the *Globe and Mail* back in November 1995 that speaks to this directly. It says:

"Continued sprawl will require a capital investment of \$82.5 billion by 2021...a figure dominated by the unavoidable costs of roads, sewer pipes, parks and schools.

On the other hand, a more compact form of development capable of accommodating the same population will cost \$69 billion by the same date.

"Dr Blais reports that the operating and maintenance costs of sprawl-based hard services will amount to \$25 billion by 2021. More compact development will generate equivalent costs of \$18 billion."

So I think there's a lot of work that has been done to show that if you allow development to go forward holus-bolus without good, sound planning principles, you really get into a problem where it's going to cost you a lot more money in the long run.

The government of the day, the NDP government of Bob Rae, under the ministry of first Mr Cooke and then Mr Philip, recognized that something had to be done, not because they had the be-all and end-all of planning and they understood all the issues but because quite frankly legislators in this House, of all three parties, were making the point that we had to find a way to streamline the planning process so that (a) we have sound planning principles, (b) we protect our environment and (c) we streamline the process to make it easier for developers.

The government of the day, under Bob Rae and under the Minister of Municipal Affairs, did two things. There was a two-pronged approach to what we would do. In regard to the question of how we streamline the planning process so that we cut some of the red tape that's there, Dale Martin was appointed in order to deal with some of the issues around red tape. At the same time the Sewell commission, made up of John Sewell, Toby Vigod and George Penfold, was put together in order to look at the longer-term questions about how you reform the Planning Act to do those three things: (1) have a sound approach to planning that is keeping with good environmental policy, (2) have a situation where we're able to cut some of the red tape and (3) be able to adopt better and sounder planning principles. That was the beginning of all of that.

Over a period of four years, the work that Mr Martin did in regard to cutting some of the red tape and the work of John Sewell brought us to where we were with Bill 163. Bill 163 was tabled in the House, I believe, in 1993 or 1994. Under Sewell the planning process underwent two years of consultation, with over 2,000 submissions from people who know something about planning.

I would echo what the member for St Catharines, Mr Bradley, said: Not all members of the House are experts when it comes to planning. I would argue there are very few of us in this House who really understand planning in such detail that they would be able to come up with the perfect Planning Act. I would argue that there may be one or two members in this House who understand it well enough to do that, and I don't include myself in that category.

That's why we sent Mr Sewell out along with others—to be able to consult with planners, to be able to consult with municipal politicians and developers, environmentalists and other people who have an interest in planning, to be able to come back with recommendations about how we reform the Planning Act so that in the end the Planning Act reflects those principles we spoke of. Two years later, along with 2,000 submissions, came forward

a series of recommendations that eventually, for the most part, found themselves contained within what was known at the time as Bill 163.

What did Bill 163 do? This is critical to understanding what this government is up to. On the question of cutting the red tape, Bill 163 did quite a bit. It cut the backlog at the OMB from 18 to 12 months. People know that the Ontario Municipal Board, known as the OMB, is the final level of appeal that you can go to as a developer or as a constituent to oppose or support a project that might have been rejected, for one reason or another, by a municipality, or vice versa. There was a problem where there were a lot of cases going to the OMB and it was taking too long to get them through that appeal process.

Under Bill 163, we cut that backlog at the OMB from 18 months down to 12. I think that is a huge improvement, a 33% improvement, in regard to what happened at the OMB. We increased at the OMB, an increase of 36%, the amount of cases the OMB is able to deal with at any time within a calendar year. We had a quicker process to bring people through the OMB process because of a couple of initiatives taken under Bill 163, and also what had happened with Mr Martin.

We also moved on the question of support of an alternative dispute resolution mechanism under Bill 163 that says not everything that goes on out there should go to the OMB. I think we all agree on that. All members, all sides of the House, I think agree that we need to find other ways other than just automatically referring things off to the OMB.

Allow me to be critical at this point of municipal governments, local mayors and aldermen, because I see it in communities across Ontario. Often a development will go forward—and we all know this—that might be good for a community, but because there are a few people within the community who are influential when it comes to the votes of people on council, the municipality will not make the decision to approve that particular application as quickly as they should, and in fact sometimes they reject it, so that they automatically refer it off to the OMB and in the end the OMB says, "Yes, it should have gone ahead."

I've seen that in a number of cases in my own municipality, and I'm sure the member for Middlesex, as a planner of many years, has seen that, where municipalities did not take the responsibility they should have to deal with adequately responding to what projects should go forward and what should not. Often there's been this reaction by municipalities to pass it up to the OMB because the decision to be made at the local level was a bit of a hot political potato. I wouldn't say that's the majority of cases, but that certainly does happen.

I think that goes contrary to what the government argues, where planning should be put strictly in the hands of local municipalities, because I think we need to recognize municipalities do play politics, as we do—and I'm the first one to admit that—as politicians play politics with the question of what should be approved. What we tried to do under Bill 163 was to say, "Let's have a professional planning process that is as free as can be from political intervention and political interference when it comes to allowing projects to go forward." Bill 163

tried to deal with that, so we looked as well at automatically sending things off to the OMB, going to a supportive alternative dispute resolution mechanism where we're trying to deal with those things outside of the court of planning, which is called the OMB.

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The other thing we did was to put absolute limits under Bill 163—that's what the NDP government did—in order to put limits on the approval of official plan amendments, because in the past there were not such limits. We recognized as a government, Bob Rae, Ed Philip and others, that we needed to do something in order to say: "There has to be, surely to God, some sort of limit that you can put on objections, when people have objections, to such applications to official plans so that they don't drag on forever. People should put forward their arguments for and against, and within a certain time period get that thing before the OMB and get a decision if it's necessary." We did the same thing. We put on a limit of six months for amendments to plans of a subdivision because we recognized as a government, I think as we all do, what developers want and what environmentalists want and what the community wants. They want to know that there's going to be a decision made and that it doesn't drag on forever. Those are some of the things we did under Bill 163.

The other thing we did was to go to municipalities and say, "Listen, let's give the staff within the planning departments greater latitude to delegate decisions around planning so that the minor things that happen that really should not be at the council level or at the OMB level can be dealt with directly at the planning department of the local municipality."

So I would say to the government, and I would say to those people watching, for them to stand before us and say, "Oh, God, under Bill 20 we fixed all these bad old problems that we've had in regard to planning that the bad old NDP government did in order to curtail planning"—I just want to remind people, for the record, that Bill 163 went an extremely long way to clarify and disentangle the planning process for developers and for those people purporting to put forward developments in the province of Ontario. I think we can be proud of that.

The other thing we did in regard to Bill 163 was to put in place much sounder principles by which to do planning in Ontario. The biggest thing we did was to clarify provincial policies, and in some cases we added the provincial policies and brought them all together so that there are provincial policies that are written, that are in place to deal with questions of development.

The government argues that the provincial policies were the problem, they were far too strict, they were far too onerous, they were much too difficult, they were much too long, they were much too big. I say if the government had a problem with the policies, why did they go and change the act?

The flexibility that you as a government were looking for in regard to allowing development to go on in an easier way—the government argues, and I'll get to that a little bit later, that rather than having to be consistent with the provincial policies, to go to a weaker standard, which is only "having regard to." I would say you would

have been a lot better off from a planning perspective, and as well I think from a streamlining perspective, to say, "Let's keep in place the provision that the NDP government put in under Bill 163 that says all planning has to be consistent with the provincial policies," but then go out and do changes to the provincial policies.

I'm the first to admit that as a result of the committee hearings we've had and the work we did as an NDP government, we could have strengthened the provincial policies in order to streamline them and make them do what we all wanted them to do, which was to provide sound planning principles that protect the environment and recognize the needs of the developer in Ontario. I think we could have done that.

For the government to argue that they had to do away with the "being consistent with" clause by replacing it with "having regard to," I think that is a false argument. I just come to that point again, that the other thing we did under 163 was to say, "You have to be consistent with those provincial policies." I guess the commonsense thing here, for a commonsense government, is that if you're going to have provincial policies, you should at least be consistent with them. I would argue that what you should have done, as I said, was to deal with the question of the policies themselves.

Part of the problem is quite frankly that the government, in its zeal to make the changes and trying to deal with things, has moved very quickly in this legislation. I just want to remind the House and I want to remind those people watching at home that Bill 163 was only proclaimed as of March 28, 1995, less than a year ago. It'll be an anniversary this week sometime. That bill, I think everybody recognized, never really got an opportunity to be able to demonstrate its worth when it comes to planning. The government, I believe, has made a grave error in moving as quickly as it did on repealing Bill 163—I should say amending Bill 163 because you didn't repeal it—and moving towards Bill 20.

I think the government would have been much wiser and I think it would have been a much more commonsense approach—pardon the pun—if the government would have said: "We will at this point look at the provincial policies. The government will make changes to the provincial policies through a public process where people in the province who are interested are able to comment. We will try to streamline the provincial policies so that they're more workable and we will see how things work out." Because the reality is, hardly a project in the province of Ontario, by the time the government decided to make amendments to Bill 163, had been even ruled under the new rules because we were still dealing with, at the OMB, all of those objections that were there prior to Bill 163.

I say the government, as usual, reacted in a sort of knee-jerk reactionary way to what happens in planning. I accept that the government has a right as a government to introduce legislation according to its philosophies and beliefs, but I would say that the government should have taken heed of the work that everybody had done over a period of four years to be able to deal with sounder principles of planning under John Sewell and Mr Martin and the work that was done at the Ministry of Municipal Affairs.

I would say Bill 163 never got a chance to prove itself as a bill. The government should have allowed it to make its way along and I would say the government, as usual, demonstrated that it moved too fast. It should have slowed down on this thing and given it a chance to work and then gone back, if need be, and make amendments to Bill 163.

But in the philosophy of the government, anything that was NDP they just had to get rid of in the first six months. I say that is a very dangerous precedent that you're setting because what you've done by doing this under Bill 163, and all of the other legislation that you have been repealing—the Advocacy Act, the Employment Equity Act, the Labour Relations Act and all of the other legislation that you have been repealing, and that's all you guys have been doing since you got the government. You haven't introduced any of your own legislation—very few exceptions. You've been repealing. You're setting an example and you're setting a precedent in this House that the next government that comes by is going to come back and repeal a bunch of stuff that you did.

I would say that is not a good process of legislating. I would argue that what governments should be doing is trying to improve on what other governments have done, trying to streamline what other governments have done and trying to make things work better. I will say, as a New Democratic member of this assembly, if we are re-elected as government the next time around in the year 1999, I can guarantee you there is going to be an act to repeal a whole bunch of stuff that you guys have done right at the beginning, because you guys have set the precedent on this and I'm putting it on the record at this point.

The government now comes to the House and says, "Last fall, we introduced a bill called Bill 20." We have second reading and then we go off to public hearings. Let's take a look at what the bill actually does. First of all, by the government moving from "being consistent with" provincial policies to "having regard to," I would make two arguments: The first argument is that allows, quite frankly, a ratcheting-down effect to happen when it comes to planning and development in the province because each municipality will look at those things somewhat differently. You will have vaguer provincial policies to follow, number one; and number two, you will only have to have regard to it. The interpretation of those policies will be different from municipality to municipality.

I would argue what you're going to do is you're going to end up putting one municipality against the other, trying to ratchet it down how they interpret the provincial policies to be able to attract development into their communities. I would say that is not a positive way to do development in the province and I would say the public of Ontario is not well dealt with.

The second thing that it will do, I think it will do quite the opposite of what you're thinking it will. In fact, I think you will have an increased amount of appeals to the OMB because if I'm a developer in the city of Timmins trying to put forward a development of a subdivision, let's say, in my community—let it be Melrose Development or whoever the developer might be—and the munic-

ipality and the city of Timmins interprets provincial policies in a particular way that is to my detriment and I find that out in Sudbury or in Elliot Lake or in North Bay, those municipalities have allowed something to happen that Timmins is not allowing to happen, what do you think the developer will do? What will Lionel Bonhomme do of Melrose Development? What will Barry Martin do of Martin Development? They will bring the municipality to the OMB, and that's what you've going to be setting up here.

I think you're going to be loading up the OMB in a period of a couple of years with a whole whack—pardon the term—of people going before the OMB saying: "Look at what the city of Sudbury did. Look at what the city of Toronto did. Look at what the city of Sarnia did. Look at what the town of Elliot Lake or Iroquois Falls did." You're going to be pitting one community against the other and developers looking at what's going on out there in regard to all of the other development to be able to find a reason why their municipality is putting too onerous a restriction, or asking them to do something.

1750

To simply put it, if I'm a developer in the city of Timmins, it would be to my advantage to have people out there who—I would argue there's going to be a whole bunch of consultants who are going to get rich on this one. You're going to have consultants looking at what's happened in every municipality across Ontario to take a look at how provincial policies are interpreted by municipalities, and they will put forward a catalogue of lists of who has the lowest standard.

If I'm the developer in Elliot Lake or North Bay or Toronto and I want to put a development through, I'll look at that and I'll say, "Oh, look at that, the city of Toronto has the lowest standard when it comes to this particular issue." Then I will go forward and try to get my development approved and my city will say no because they have a higher development standard. Guess who's gone to the OMB? The developer is at the OMB right away. I think what you're getting into is back to the problem we had before under Bill 163 with too many people going to the OMB. You're really going to be forcing that issue.

The other thing is the question of provincial policies. I think people should understand what's happening around the question of provincial policies. For an example, the provincial policies dealt with questions like housing. For an example, if a developer was putting forward a plan to develop a subdivision, that developer, he or she, had to have a plan that said 30% of those housing units built had to be affordable; termed as "affordable housing." People say, "Well, what does that mean?" It means to say that you don't allow exclusive neighbourhoods to pop up in a subdivision somewhere out of the reach of certain people, because we've learned in our society good planning in regard to having mixed neighbourhoods leads to safer communities, and leads to a better understanding of the communities among us.

The other issue, quite frankly, is for an individual to be able to afford to build a home—and at the time the government is scrapping rent control, scrapping the question of the Landlord and Tenant Act, selling off

public housing and doing everything else. This is sort of just another part of the chink in the armour where the government is really pronouncing itself that it doesn't have a housing policy in this province. They believe that everything should be thrown over to the private sector, and let development and let rental and let all of it go the way it wants.

The other thing, one of the policies they had was the question of the heritage policy, which was the no-means-no policy that we had heard a lot about. I just want to read this so people understand. "No-means-no provision in the natural heritage policy statements: That means that no development will be permitted on significant ravines, valleys, rivers and streams and corridors, and a significant portion of the habitat of endangered species and threatened species. Developments will not be permitted on adjacent land if it negatively impacts the ecological feature of the function listed above."

The government is saying you won't have to follow such a policy, and that means to say developers will be allowed to, because of moving from having to be consistent with the policies to having regard to the policy, apply for developments in areas that are sensitive to our environment and to the wildlife in our areas. I think the government is really being narrow-minded in its vision of what planning should be by allowing that to happen.

The other policy, for an example, that won't be followed is the question of transportation policies. I alluded to the Minister of Transportation a little while earlier. Under the provincial policies set out under the NDP government, we were saying that when you're doing development work in regard to looking at what your official plan will look like, you have to take a look at questions of transportation so that we don't end up with situations where traffic patterns and highways are not able to support the development that is going on, and to look at those questions from what is the most economic and most efficient system of transportation so that transit can be planned for ahead of time, as you're developing your official plan of your municipality and you say, "We're going to allow development to happen in this particular area"; that your highways or freeways are the proper size; that we have good public transportation that has good access to that particular area; and that we look at questions of transportation, because we all know if you try to come in after and develop a system of transportation around urban sprawl, it costs you a pack of dollars. But if you were to plan for that ahead of time and you have it clearly set out in your provincial policies, I think it allows the development of that transit system eventually to be done at a much cheaper rate because you don't have a situation—for an example, I would look at the Allen Expressway as a great example.

Here's a situation where years ago it would have been very nice if we had sound planning principles such as we had under Bill 163. It would have said it would make some sense to have a freeway connection from north of the 401 down to the Gardiner Expressway. If you tried to do that today through the Allen Expressway, it would cost you billions of dollars to try to buy the land to be able to do that. I think it's a good example of how bad planning could cost the infrastructure money in the longer run.

So I would say the government, by moving away from provincial policies, is really getting into a lot of problems here. I've got to ask the bigger question: Who benefits? Who benefits through the changes that the government is making under the Planning Act? That's really the question.

I can tell you, the people who will benefit are not you watching back home, by and large, not the hardworking men and women who live in communities who are looking for safe communities to live in, they're looking for communities that are well-planned, not the taxpayer, because we know that urban sprawl costs you money in the longer term. The people who are going to benefit from this are a very few people in the development industry who wanted Bill 20 to go forward to be able to gut a whole bunch of good planning processes that we had under Bill 163.

I think that is yet another example of how this government is trying to play to a special interest. This government, the Mike Harris government, the Mike Harris Conservative Party—or should I say the radical right party of Ontario—campaigned in 1995—

Applause.

Mr Bisson: And they applaud "the radical right." I think we should point that out. They campaigned in 1995 in saying, "We want to move away from special-interest politics." I would say this is the biggest special interest that you're serving up to one of your friends in the first year of your government. People need to be clear that the special interests of the Conservative Party, or I should say the radical right party, of Ontario is a very few people who stand to make a whole bunch of money. Why? Because the Mike Harris government wants to give a tax cut.

That's what it comes down to. They believe in an ideology that says the private sector does it better; as a matter of fact, they're the only ones who can do it at all. The public sector has no role to play when it comes to all of this and somehow or other if we put ourselves in the hands of the private sector, everything will be better, is one principle, and the other one is, they're trying to find ways to save money in the administration of planning so that they can serve up a tax cut to their rich friends, the people who are going to most benefit from that tax cut.

I know at this stage of the game, we're at third reading, the government's got a majority in the House and they're not going to change legislation based on this debate. I recognize that. I notice that one of my friends on the other side is nodding in the affirmative. I understand that. But I just warn, and I've said this at committee before, my observation of being in this House over the last six years, through first of all our majority government and now under your majority government, it is clear to me that as legislators we need to find a way that we can come to this House and have meaningful debate on issues of public concern and on public policy.

The problem that you have—I think it's a greater problem than we had within our party; I think we've certainly suffered from that as well, but I don't think to quite the extent that you do—is that a select few people in your cabinet make decisions based on polls, based on trying to serve up the plate to the special interests that

you're following and the rest of you are sitting there having to follow through with what the cabinet and P and P has told you that you should do.

Ms Churley: They don't even know what it is.

Mr Bisson: In most cases, members don't know, and I would say some of the opposition members don't know as well. I'm the critic for this issue, so I followed it; my good friend Marilyn Churley from Riverdale has followed this closely, she's carried the bill through committee. We understand fairly well what's going on. But the danger here is that we're in a process that if we don't as legislators try to address the question of how we have meaningful debate in order to have reflective legislation of what our communities want and what our constituencies want that we represent, I think it is really a farce. Here we are at third reading having a debate, knowing full well the government is going to change absolutely nothing when it comes to the question of planning in the province of Ontario.

The last point I would make, in the last two minutes that I have: The government is scrapping Bill 120, which was the apartments-in-houses component that we had done when we were a government through Bill 20. They're scrapping that. I would say, shame on the government. Bill 120 was one of the mechanisms that was going to allow and did allow people to be able to put an apartment in their home so they can afford to pay their mortgage, number one, because most of the people who put an apartment in a house, it's to be able to pay the mortgage.

The second point is that it's really one of the only initiatives that the government had in its mechanism at this point to be able to deal positively with being able to create apartments for people in the province of Ontario. I would say to the government, that is really bewildering, because Bill 120 was probably more in keeping with the Tory ideology than it was with ours as New Democrats.

With that, I would ask that we adjourn the debate and we come back tomorrow with comments from my friend from Riverdale.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Pursuant to standing order 34, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

1800

EDUCATION SURVEY

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member for Ottawa Centre has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Education and Training concerning the poll commissioned by the minister. The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister or parliamentary assistant may reply for up to five minutes.

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): Thank you, Mr Minister, for joining us after 6. This is an important matter, as you well know, and as evidenced by the interest from a variety of teachers' groups and federations and from newspaper articles. I would like to cite a few examples.

You will also know that I sent you a letter in February asking for a copy of this poll and was told that it was not quite finished—that on February 21, which of course is

over a month ago, it was not yet available. However, I appreciated your commitment on March 6, during the scrum that you had that day in your release on the funding that was affecting the school board. At that time you said that you of course would table in the Legislature this particular poll.

I would like to illustrate a few points so that the public has an appreciation for what a push poll really is. I would like to read a paragraph from the president of the Ontario Public School Teachers' Federation, Mr Reg Ferland, whom the minister I'm sure knows. He says, in relation to the use of such a poll, and I quote:

"We recognize that polling is a common and legitimate practice for governments to undertake. Unfortunately, the Minister of Education and Training has crossed the line of acceptable and responsible government practice." This is a letter, by the way, to the Premier from this particular federation. "No one would look at the list of questions included in the ministry poll and not be totally appalled at the blatant manipulation at work. It is absolutely clear that, through this particular poll, the government has no interest in determining public opinion on education issues. Rather the poll is a crass attempt to develop 'research' data to justify draconian cuts to education spending and to teacher collective agreements. The polling and attendant focus group testing are also being used to disseminate misleading information about teachers and education spending. Education and the public are being badly served and abused by such action."

I have another reference from the Toronto Sun, which some might say is a dear friend of the Tory party, from Mr Lorrie Goldstein. He talks about this in one of his articles, called "Sneak Attack on Teachers." He says:

"What you do in a push poll, under the veil of asking questions, is to put out negative information about your opponent.

"Here's an example: 'Would you vote for so-and-so if you knew he had taken money from a developer in 1985?' The question may be technically accurate, but it only solicits opinion after giving a biased preamble. The point isn't to gather objective data but to get information out to the public about your opponent in as damaging a way as possible.

"A push poll is designed to give you that negative information, then have you tell your neighbours." Lorrie Goldstein, Toronto Sun.

Ottawa Citizen. I hear, and agreed by the education ministry spokeswoman, Carol Zelniker: "'It is being conducted by the ministry and the minister's office is involved also,' she said." I asked that question earlier.

So it seems to me, when we look at this, it's vitally important that the public know where this initiative comes from. The implication, of course, is that it comes from the minister's office. I can't see the ministry officials themselves, most of whom have a background in the educational field, wanting to initiate this kind of an effort to discredit some of their former colleagues or people in Ontario who are professional educators.

So I will ask, Mr Minister, the two questions that I asked again today: When will you release the poll and the answers to the poll, as you said you would? And second-

ly, was it your office that initiated the idea of doing this kind of poll in the first place?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I'm pleased to have a chance to be in the chamber again, although I'd point out to the Speaker and the other members who are present here now that these questions were answered, and answered properly, yesterday. However, I'm pleased to have a chance to inform the member for Ottawa Centre again as to when I might table this particular piece of work that was done for and on behalf of the ministry.

I will table it in due course. I don't have a date for tabling it at this point, but as I have told the member in the past, I will table it in the normal course of events here in the House, subject to the normal rules here. I will be tabling it and making this public at some point in the future.

As far as who commissioned this particular poll is concerned, it was commissioned by an approved third-party vendor, who is expert in polling and polling data, by my ministry. I think that's been clear in public statements by officials from my ministry, and I believe the member for Ottawa Centre just read from those public documents recently from the popular press.

There seems to be no mystery around this issue. The only mystery is a mystery in the imagination of the member opposite. We have not conducted a push poll, for goodness' sake. We've conducted a regular poll that is done on a regular basis by ministries that want to stay in touch with the people of Ontario, that want to know the opinions of the people of Ontario.

As I said yesterday, as I told the member opposite yesterday, I am shocked and surprised that he would doubt that the people of Ontario would back classroom teachers. I can tell the member opposite that the people of Ontario back the classroom teachers, know that the classroom teachers are important to the development of their children and that that position is professional and important to them. I wonder why you would doubt that, sir.

Second, I wonder why you would doubt a poll that you yourself today quoted someone as saying it is a common and legitimate practice. Of course it is. It's part of our responsibility to stay in touch with the people of Ontario.

I will table this poll—I'll table it quite proudly—in due course.

NORTHERN AIR SERVICE

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member for Algoma-Manitoulin has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Northern Development and Mines re norOntair. The member has up to five minutes and the parliamentary assistant will have up to five minutes to reply.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): This afternoon I asked the Minister of Northern Development and Mines some questions concerning norOntair. As we all would know, the minister on November 29 issued a press release which in essence closed down norOntair. On Friday the last flights will occur and then norOntair is no longer.

Private carriers have taken up quite a number of the routes that were formerly flown by norOntair. However, there are three communities that are not served, and my question's related directly to those three communities, those being Hornepayne, Gore Bay and Chapleau.

Those communities, the minister announced yesterday, would be served by Voyageur Airways. They will be subsidized. It is a contract that was not let by public tender. The minister refused this afternoon to tell me about the tendering process and the minister refused to tell us how much it cost. I think people in this province expect governments, when they are spending public money, to tender, to make sure they have the best deal for the public. The ministry in this case did not do that.

We, as parliamentarians and legislators, have an obligation to make sure that the public's money is spent in the best possible way, so I was appalled that the Minister of Northern Development would not give me an answer. I'm sure, if he were here, he would be able to give me an answer this evening. The parliamentary assistant, Mr Murdoch, is here, and I appreciate that fact, but I have a feeling that he is not going to answer the question I'm posing. I just have a sense.

It's an important issue. I see them laughing over there. I think the public has a right to know, and that's what this question is really about.

1810

The next part of the question, which I think is as serious: Will those northern communities that may lose air service over the next year to two years be guaranteed an air service by this ministry? Will this ministry provide them with the kind of subsidization it might take to provide a level of service that is acceptable to the community?

I also raised the issue of Elliot Lake, for example. It's just one of the communities that has a private carrier, but the service Elliot Lake will be getting with the private carrier is not acceptable to that community. There is a significant reduction of flights to the community and the times to the community are not as conducive to doing business or getting to medical appointments or any of those things that northerners need.

I'm asking if the ministry would do what it should have done in the first place, that is, assess what the needs of these communities are and then put out proposals to see if the private sector would provide them and at what price. They did not approach this situation in any kind of logical, sensible way in terms of what northerners would want and that I'm sure all the people in the province would want. We don't know what it's going to cost, we don't know whether it will be more cost-effective than norOntair was, we don't know what service the communities will get, we don't know what service they'll get in terms of aircraft. We don't even know if, down the road, they'll be guaranteed to have service or whether this is just some smokescreen by a ministry that is telling northerners that the market will decide everything: "If you're too small, too bad. If you can't get to your medical appointment, can't get to the hospital, that's too bad, because you live in too small a community." Is that the new Conservative view of the north?

Just so he doesn't get sidetracked, I want a specific answer to the tendering and the cost of that tendering. I'm sure you'll be able to give me those numbers.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): I first must apologize for the minister. He's unable to come. It was short notice, and he had other meetings he had to go to. He certainly would have liked to have been here. I apologize. I know it'll be tough to answer the question for the member from Algoma, because he's never satisfied, never seems to be satisfied with answers.

The member for Algoma-Manitoulin knows that the ONTC is an independent—

Mr Michael Brown: Come on, Bill. Did they tender and how much?

Mr Murdoch: If you would like to listen for a minute, maybe I could answer this. I do have five minutes. I'll start again just so you will get the answer and you'll be able to be quiet for a little while, if you wouldn't mind.

Now, I'll go back. The member for Algoma-Manitoulin knows that the ONTC is an independent schedule 2 agency of the government of Ontario. I knew you knew that.

In your questions today, you have asked about the details of the four-month interim contract that was given to ensure that air service continues to all 17 communities served by norOntair after March 29. The Minister of Northern Development and Mines has asked for the president of the ONTC to report back to him as soon as possible with the answer.

In regard to the broader question of the future of air service in the north, the minister has always been committed to efficient, cost-effective air service in northern Ontario. The ONTC board will continue to work with the air service consultation committee for this purpose.

We thank you for the question, and I hope that answers your question.

RED HILL CREEK EXPRESSWAY

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member for Hamilton East has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of Transportation concerning Red Hill Creek Expressway funding. He has up to five minutes for his presentation and the parliamentary assistant will have up to five minutes to reply.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I am disappointed that the minister has chosen not to attend. This is not to take anything away from the parliamentary assistant to the minister; however, obviously Mr Palladini, the minister, does not feel that the expressway issue is important enough to take his time.

I want to put on the record as well that we made an offer to have this at another time that was convenient in order to have Mr Palladini here. He refused, and that tells me very clearly the importance that he attaches to the expressway and to the needs of Hamilton-Wentworth. That is something we will not forget.

It is clear this government and this minister do not understand the Red Hill Creek Expressway issue, nor do they understand the commitment made by the Premier. Let me read again for the Tory members the commitment

made in December 1994 by Mike Harris to regional chairman Terry Cooke:

"A Mike Harris government"—that's you guys—"will support and fund a full-fledged expressway up to and including the six-lane model which was originally approved, along with a full environmental cleanup of the Red Hill Creek Valley." Signed Mike Harris, MPP, leader at that time.

That was your Premier, your leader who made that commitment. This commitment was unconditional. There were no strings attached. It was very clear: "We are going to fund up to a six-lane expressway." At that time, again to remind my friends across the floor, the six-lane expressway would have meant a commitment of \$182 million of provincial government funding for Hamilton-Wentworth.

What we are now seeing is a total retrenching, is a total regression of that commitment. The region has scaled down the project to five lanes. The scaled-down version will mean that the provincial cost is \$150 million. Therefore, it's \$32 million less than the Premier had committed to Hamilton-Wentworth in December 1994, when he was trying to get votes in Hamilton-Wentworth.

Regional chairman Terry Cooke, chairman of the committee in charge of the expressway; Councillor Terry Anderson; and the former chairman of the expressway committee and the chairman of economic development, Councillor Don Ross, have all stated very clearly that the funding shortfall is unacceptable and that the province and the Premier have shortchanged them.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I think they're all Tories, aren't they?

Mr Agostino: Yes. This is not a question of political partisanship. Chairman Cooke has worked with this government, has cooperated with this government, and frankly supports many of the things this government has done. Councillor Anderson, same way, has supported—even today in the *Spectator* has said this government has lived up to many of its commitments. He's one of your supporters, one of your friends. He has expressed dissatisfaction with the way you handled it.

Councillor Don Ross, a card-carrying member of the Conservative Party of Ontario—

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Who's he married to?

Mr Agostino:—and the spouse of the Hamilton West Tory MPP, said last night that what you have done is a betrayal, unacceptable and that you have shortchanged Hamilton-Wentworth. That didn't come from us; that came from one of your own, your own member, your own card-carrying Conservative member. That's who made that commitment.

Those members who have spoken, that is not political partisanship on their part; it is the interests of the region. I can tell you that I believe this issue is beyond the competence, the grasp of this minister. He doesn't understand it. He should simply walk away, and we ask that the Premier personally intervene to settle this issue. We ask that Premier Harris direct the minister to bring forward full funding for the project. Frankly, the region has lost all confidence in the minister to deal with this

issue. He has shown he is incompetent, he has shown he doesn't understand Hamilton-Wentworth, and he has shown that he doesn't understand the formula that his own Premier committed to.

The losers in this battle are the Hamilton-Wentworth citizens, the individuals who placed faith in this government and in the Premier and felt when the Premier gave his word in December 1994 that that word was good and that the Premier was going to live up to that commitment. They have been shafted by this government. They have been betrayed. The failure of this government to build the expressway will become a big black hole that will suck up the four local Tory members come the next election.

I ask again the representative of the minister, will you commit today to the promise that the Premier made in December 1994 to fully fund the expressway, and will you intervene to ensure that the Premier personally becomes involved and rescue the region from Mr Palladini and ensure that there is full funding to the expressway? If there is not, it is nothing more than another broken promise, another betrayal. If you don't believe me, ask your Tory members and card-carrying Conservatives in Hamilton-Wentworth.

The Speaker: The member's time has expired. The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation has up to five minutes to reply.

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): On November 29, 1995, the province committed to provide \$100 million over the next five years towards a projected \$200 million required to complete the Red Hill Creek Expressway and its interchanges with the QEW and Highway 403. This is in addition to the \$80 million already contributed by the province to support this major undertaking of local and regional significance.

I should stress that this funding partnership and the \$100 million committed is unique to Hamilton-Wentworth. In fact, all other municipalities across the province have seen significant reductions over the last several months. I believe this firm commitment represents a significant provincial and tangible investment in Hamilton-Wentworth's future.

The province's cost estimate for the Red Hill expressway was based on its extensive freeway construction experience and comparison with a variety of recently completed highway projects. This estimate recognized the complex nature of building an expressway in the Red Hill Creek Valley. The minister estimated \$16 million per kilometre for the roadway portion of the expressway.

Below are several current ministry expressway projects which demonstrate typical freeway construction costs:

Highway 401 express collector widening, six lanes: \$10 million per kilometre;

Highway 407 east, six lanes: \$11 million per kilometre;
Highway 407 central, six lanes, no freeway-to-freeway interchanges: \$13 million per kilometre;

Highway 403, Ancaster to Brantford, four lanes, rural: \$4 million per kilometre.

We are confident in this \$200-million cost estimate based on Hamilton-Wentworth's conceptual design of the Red Hill Creek Expressway. In fact, the ministry has already received independent, third-party cost estimates to complete the Red Hill Creek Expressway project.

Rather than consultants quibbling over cost estimates, the ministry has asked Mr Cooke to immediately call for tenders to determine the real price. We believe that Hamilton-Wentworth may wish to pursue an independent assessment of cost savings that could be realized through value engineering, innovative construction techniques and private partnerships. By pursuing similar techniques, MTO was able to achieve a 22% saving on Highway 407. Any saving that Hamilton-Wentworth can realize through such an approach would reduce their share of the cost.

Hamilton-Wentworth will be able to use development charges revenue towards its share of the project—potentially \$40 million to \$60 million over time. The Ontario Realty Corp, an agency of the province, will contribute \$5 million directly to the expressway through such charges.

The province is fully prepared to fulfil its commitment and provide its \$100-million share for the Red Hill Creek Expressway, but not if the expressway is tolled. Regional and provincial taxpayers have already contributed \$150 million to the project. Making this expressway a toll road would in effect make the taxpayer pay for this road twice.

We can assure you that MTO will continue to assist Hamilton-Wentworth in resolving technical concerns associated with the Red Hill Creek Expressway-QEW interchange. In addition, the minister is prepared to meet with regional representatives to discuss concerns expressed with regard to funding for the Red Hill Creek Expressway. In fact, the minister met less than two hours ago with regional chair Terry Cooke and transportation chair Terry Anderson. This is good news for Hamilton. The east-west portion of the expressway should be opened in two years, with the entire expressway completed by 2001. At that time, the benefits to area commuters and businesses will finally be realized after four decades of planning.

The Speaker: There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.

The House adjourned at 1824.

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No. 48

N° 48

ISSN 1180-2987

**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 36th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 36^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Wednesday 27 March 1996

Mercredi 27 mars 1996



Speaker
Honourable Allan K. McLean

Président
L'honorable Allan K. McLean

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 27 March 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 27 mars 1996

*The House met at 1331.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

RENT REGULATION

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): The constant bullying tactics of the Harris government continue. The government's commitment to end rent controls will have the disastrous effect of forcing many people away from affordable housing. Decent, affordable housing should be the priority for this government, not the wholesale dismantling of rent controls. This plan can only result in forcing the families who can least afford it from their homes.

The government's strategy is simple: First, they wanted to remove the controls which protect tenants from evictions; now they are removing the controls which protect tenants from dramatic rent increases. When you combine the two, it amounts to an anti-tenant agenda. What the government fails to realize is that many families are already stretched to their financial breaking point. The real tragedy in this will be that once families can no longer afford rent increases, their options begin to run out and, sadly, they will have no place to turn.

The fear many tenants feel is real. They see the only form of tenant protection fading away. Rent controls sheltered many tenants from unfair rent increases. I call upon the Harris government to reconsider its decision to scrap rent controls and explore other options which provide more equitable treatment of tenants.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE DISPUTE

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I want to respond to the fact that the Chair of Management Board has chosen today to break the news blackout around the negotiations and cause all kinds of turmoil and havoc on the picket lines. One would think, given the fact that progress seemed to be made under the news blackout, that perhaps this government really doesn't want a settlement. You really have to wonder when the Chair of Management Board, the minister responsible, says something as irresponsible and, according to the union, as blatantly untrue as what he has said this morning.

The union's position in this is that there are no new demands and they can only assume that the government is looking—I quote from a newsletter they've had to put out today: "Johnson's goal is to throw OPSEU members off balance and cause a panic on the picket lines. Don't fall for it. Stay strong." This is the kind of message the

union has to send out now because the government has broken that news blackout.

The union goes on to say to their own members, "Tell him to shut up and let the bargaining teams do their work so we can all get back to work as soon as possible." That's what it's supposed to be all about: getting this strike over and putting people back to work. If the minister doesn't understand what a news blackout is, he ought to talk to his deputy minister or somebody else who does understand how things work. He's doing an awful lot of damage. The people of Ontario, the strikers and, I would hope, the government want this strike to end, and the way they'll do it is to have the minister shut up about it.

TEEN WORK

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): I rise today in the House to recognize a very significant achievement by the youth in my riding. Last summer, some local teens initiated Teen Work, an organization designed in response to teen vandalism in the town of Campbellford.

The project was sparked by Shawn O'Brian, a local youth, and guided by the mayor and the chamber of commerce. It is a unique program designed to help young people between the ages of 13 and 19 years of age understand the challenges they face due to rising youth unemployment and a harsh economic climate.

By attempting to build self-esteem and confidence, Teen Work hopes to encourage teenagers to start businesses of their own. Its main objectives are to reduce the occurrence of vandalism and apathy among the youth of Campbellford, to help teens recognize opportunities to earn money using the resources at their disposal and to prove that youth programs can be cost-effective and self-sustaining.

The project began with no capital funding and relies on a percentage of the earnings generated by its members to ensure its financial stability.

It initially had four members and a project coordinator. Teen Work has since expanded to include many other projects, and by this spring Teen Work will have a membership of nearly 40 teens.

Teen Work is a remarkable achievement. It is a good example of how communities and the private sector can join together to fight unemployment without any government assistance.

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): I read in the local press recently that the bond rating services are very uneasy about the Premier's election promise to cut provincial income tax by 30%. Specifically, Dominion Bond Rating

Service has called the tax cut "the biggest single hurdle to balancing the budget."

All the Premier's friends are abandoning ship. Even his slash-and-burn hero, Alberta's Ralph Klein, has warned the Ontario Conservatives against the tax cut. Several of our esteemed colleagues from the other side of the floor are reading petitions in this House from constituents and taxpayers that question the wisdom of the tax cut.

Yet last week on Focus Ontario the Premier said: "They're all wrong. In the Common Sense Revolution we felt it would take about \$6 billion worth of spending reductions to balance the books over five years, but the NDP government's spending was about \$2 billion higher than they told us."

I don't know about you, but this sounds like political baffle-gab. The Premier told us himself that he's not very good with numbers. Perhaps he should listen to his experts, his own caucus, and the people of Ontario.

PROGRESSIVE CONSERVATIVE PARTY

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I read with some interest, following the federal by-elections, the talk once again of the Tories and the Reform Party coming together.

I think it is worthwhile noting that for the people of Ontario, the reality has been that since June 8 we have been governed by the Reform Party in this province. When we look at the actions of the Mike Harris government in attacking the poor through the welfare cuts, in attacking children through those same welfare cuts and through the cuts to child care, in cutting funding to education, in cutting funding to the very job creation programs that this government says it's committed to, we have seen in instance after instance in the area of health care broken promises and broken commitments, but above all an agenda that is based on putting more power and more resources into the hands of a few, into the hands of the wealthiest in this province at the expense of the rest of the citizens in this province. That is the Reform agenda across this country, and it certainly is the agenda of the Mike Harris government.

So I was not surprised when I saw the member for Etobicoke West being quoted as saying that he thinks the merger of the Reform Party and the Conservative Party is a brilliant idea, because in Ontario it's already happened.

1340

VISIT OF MINISTER OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Mr Tom Froese (St Catharines-Brock): I'd like to take this opportunity to acknowledge my colleague the Minister of Community and Social Services, the Honourable David Tsubouchi, for his visit to the St Catharines-Thorold area on January 25, 1996. The minister spent the entire day visiting municipal and private groups and listening to their vision of an Ontario that works.

His first stop was at the Niagara region's employment programs department. Over the past 20 years they have truly learned what it means to streamline and reduce duplication while at the same time providing a proactive

and caring program to get social assistance recipients back into the working community. In fact, as part of the region's general welfare program they have saved some \$11 million over the past four years alone.

The minister also heard presentations from the YMCA, Niagara College and the John Howard Society, which have a great deal of experience with community works placements. Mr Tsubouchi visited Bethlehem Place. They are a second-stage housing complex for the disadvantaged and women recovering from abuse. Their workfare model, which they call BP Works, is forward-looking, as they have included work placement and community works segments right in their environment.

On behalf of all those Mr Tsubouchi visited on January 25, 1996, I thank him for his openness and support.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): When Premier Harris contends that his proposed 30% cut in provincial income taxes is not to blame for job losses in Ontario, employees of the Lincoln County Board of Education and the Niagara South Board of Education could be forgiven for not believing him, as will the employees of the two Roman Catholic boards in the area as well.

With 277 Lincoln employees and 282 Niagara staff receiving pink slips this week, the Premier's contention that drastic cuts in provincial funding, necessitated to a great extent by the tax cut, will not affect students in the classroom is simply not believable.

With thoughtful people from all segments of society questioning the wisdom of a 30% provincial income tax cut which will benefit the most wealthy to the greatest extent, a tax cut which will require the government to borrow over 20 billion additional dollars, a tax cut which has been called reckless by the Conservative member for Wellington and is questioned by other Tory members, with this in mind, it is difficult to believe that the Premier would ignore the good advice to abandon this ideological measure which is hurting education and so many other segments of our society to such a great extent. Pause and think. Use common sense.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I rise to bring to the attention of the House and all members, particularly the Minister of Community and Social Services, a case in my constituency. A young woman who is receiving benefits as a single mother has an abscessed tooth that has poisoned her system so badly that her whole face is swollen. Her dentist wants to operate today. He wants to do the operation, the procedure, in a hospital so that the patient can be put under anaesthesia by an anaesthetist.

However, because of your cuts, family services cannot provide this woman with discretionary funding to pay for this procedure. As a result, she has to make a choice between this procedure or cutting back on the funds that are available to her and her family for food and lodging for the rest of the month. How on earth can you put this woman in this kind of a situation?

I call upon the government to reconsider its position on these cuts and to ensure that social workers have discre-

tionary funds which they can allocate in emergencies like this so that people aren't forced to make these kinds of choices. I call on the minister to look into the situation and to act immediately.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): I'd like to draw to the attention of the leader of the third party that, according to the rules, a leader is not allowed to make a statement.

Mr Wildman: Mr Speaker, I apologize. Actually, I was filling in for one of our other members who was supposed to make one and isn't here.

HOSPITAL ALLIANCE

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): Yesterday, in my riding, two Chatham hospitals, Public General and St Joseph's, announced the formation of an alliance to better provide community health care.

The move, which I am delighted to endorse, will take place April 1 and is expected to improve efficiency at both hospitals and provide the framework for an \$11-million saving objective.

Over the past few years, officials from both hospitals have worked together to come up with a plan to both maximize resources and meet future health care challenges.

Under the alliance, there will be a single CEO in administration, duplication of resources and services will be eliminated, cost-containing efficiencies will be increased, patient access to all services will be improved and strategic planning will be enhanced.

The alliance will be managed by a joint executive committee comprised of six members from each hospital board, the chief of medical staff and a new CEO.

Neither a merger nor an amalgamation, the alliance is best described as a relationship that respects and builds upon the excellent record of care given to the community by the hospitals over the past 100 years.

The emergence of this alliance proves that efficiencies can be found in the hospital system to free up scarce health care dollars for use in other areas.

I would like to commend those who have worked so diligently to bring this concept to fruition. Successfully creating an efficient, effective system which also respects individual preferences and goals is of benefit to everyone in the community.

SPEAKER'S RULING

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Yesterday, several members rose on points of order with respect to language used and comments made during question period. I have reviewed the Hansard for yesterday, and I must say to the members that in terms of temperate language and tone, it was not one of our finer days.

To the Solicitor General, I would caution that the remarks made yesterday were inappropriate, intemperate and ill advised. I believe that, upon reflection, the honourable minister came to be of that same opinion, as he saw fit to withdraw the comments and later to apologize to the member for London Centre.

Erskine May advises at page 380 that "Good temper and moderation are the characteristics of parliamentary

language." It would I think be beneficial to this House if members on both sides carefully consider that advice and address this House with dignity and respect.

For my part, and with your cooperation, I will be vigilant in enforcing your rules that require civil discourse and decorum on the part of all members in this House.

ORAL QUESTIONS

TAX REDUCTION

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): My first question is for the Minister of Finance. You may be aware that Ralph Klein, the Premier of Alberta, has said that your plan to balance the budget and to cut taxes at the same time will be very difficult to achieve. In fact, to be specific, he said that to do that one has to be more than a politician, one has to be a magician.

The Premier has apparently dismissed these comments from what one might call his soulmate as being motivated somehow by jealousy and by fear. He suggests that Mr Klein is being critical of the revolution because he's actually afraid that maybe Ontario will steal Alberta's jobs. It seems rather bizarre to me that this is a Premier who writes off not only his enemies but also his friends.

Minister, I would draw to your attention the fact that the economist for the Canadian Manufacturers' Association also has had some comments on your plan and on its prospects for creating jobs. He said: "Cutting personal income taxes won't do anything for job creation. People will use their extra cash to pay down their debts, not to buy goods that will create jobs."

1350

You will know that the members of the Canadian Manufacturers' Association are the people who are supposed to create jobs, and they don't believe your tax cut will stimulate job growth. The Premier has said that Ralph Klein's views are wrong because he's playing some kind of political game. What ulterior motive do you think the Canadian Manufacturers' Association might have for saying that your plan won't work?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): I don't attribute motives to comments that anybody makes with respect to any proposals that the government is making. If we had the taxation rate, quite frankly, in the province of Ontario that the province of Alberta has, we wouldn't see it necessary to cut provincial income tax rates either. I'd love to be in the position that Mr Klein is in, and we wouldn't have to worry about it.

Mrs McLeod: The minister will also be aware that the Premier has been advertising his tax cut as some kind of a "Don't pay a cent" event. He's telling us that the tax cut is going to pay for itself in some kind of an economic surge and he somehow wants people to believe that your spending cuts have nothing to do with your tax cut.

The Bank of Nova Scotia has warned you that the tax cut will require even deeper cutting. The bank has said, "If they continue to push for their tax cut, and I have no reason to believe that they won't, then maybe one way to ensure that the targets and the credit rating can be maintained is to cut spending that much deeper at that

particular time." Minister, if Ralph Klein is wrong, is the Bank of Nova Scotia wrong too? Why do they say that your tax cut will require even deeper cuts when your Premier is telling Ontarians that it won't cost a cent?

Hon Mr Eves: We are firmly of the opinion, as the leader of the official opposition knows, that over time a reduction in provincial income tax rates will return itself many-fold to the government of Ontario but, more importantly, to the people of Ontario.

I note that the leader of the official opposition selectively quotes individuals who don't happen to believe that a 30% tax cut is appropriate at this particular point in time, but she did not mention some of the individuals who appeared before the legislative committee on finance and economic affairs who were very supportive of a tax cut, they being Patti Croft, the chief economist of Canada Trust company; Aron Gampel, vice-president and deputy chief economist of the Bank of Nova Scotia; Bill Robson, senior policy analyst, C.D. Howe Institute; the Ontario Natural Gas Association; Wallace Kenny, president of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce; Don McIver, chief economist, Sun Life Assurance Co of Canada; Peter Woolford, senior vice-president, Retail Council of Canada; the Canadian Chemical Producers' Association; Judith Andrew, director of provincial policy, Canadian Federation of Independent Business; Tom Closson, president and CEO of Sunnybrook health centre, and on and on.

The leader of the official opposition has been extremely selective as to the quotes she chooses to use with respect to the tax cut. Those people have an opinion, they are entitled to it, but we will be proceeding with our program to put money back in the pockets of hard-working taxpaying Ontarians.

Mrs McLeod: I'm talking about quotes from this minister's own Premier, who has said that the 30% cut in income taxes is not going to cost Ontarians a cent. He says it's going to be paid for some day in the future with some kind of an economic surge.

Last week the same Premier was talking about economic drag. Now we have a much better sense of what he meant by "economic drag," because that's the job loss that comes with the layoffs, that comes with the cuts that this government is making to bring in its 30% income tax cut. Now we have Mikeconomics, the theory that the tax cut is going to pay for itself by creating new jobs to replace all those lost jobs.

Minister, you don't want me to quote the critics, so let me quote your own numbers. If Mikeconomics is going lead to new job creation through this tax cut, why do the unemployment projections from the November economic statement, your own economic statement, predict that the number of people unemployed will go up this year and up again next year? Why do your own numbers predict increasing unemployment if this 30% income tax cut is going to be such a job bonanza?

Hon Mr Eves: The leader of the official opposition is quite aware that in the month of February alone the province of Ontario created 31,000 jobs. To be more specific, Mr Speaker, through you to the leader of the official opposition, here are a few of the most recent comments with respect to job creation in the province of Ontario:

Zellers in Toronto, March 15 of this year, 450 jobs; Manulife Financial, Waterloo, March 6, 300 jobs; Cambril, Waterloo, March 2, 40 jobs; Cosella Dorken in Beamsville, March, 25 to 50 jobs; Ford of Canada in Oakville, February 17, 150 jobs; Honda in Alliston, December 1995, 1,200 jobs; Walt Disney, Toronto, November 30, 1995, 100 jobs.

So there again the leader of the official opposition is being extremely selective in the figures that she chooses and the comments that she makes with respect to job creation. I know that she finds it hard to believe, but reducing the tax burden on hardworking taxpaying Ontarians will indeed create jobs and stimulate the economy in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): New question, the leader of the official opposition.

Mrs McLeod: Mr Speaker, I don't think even the minister believes that any longer. I say to the minister, talk about using statistics selectively—and my second question is to the minister. Last month there were 7,000 more people out of work than there were the month before. As the layoffs from your cuts begin to take effect, there will be thousands and thousands more out of work, and that's exactly why people across this province are concerned about your tax cut.

Last week, Minister, I asked you how you could justify slashing tens of thousands of jobs to pay for a \$5-billion-a-year tax cut that mainly benefits the wealthy. Your response that I found astonishing was to say, and I quote, "We are not taking away thousands of jobs in Ontario to finance the tax cut."

So my question is this: How can you tell the 1,300 health care workers who are being laid off at the Toronto Hospital that they're not losing their jobs because of your tax cut? How can you tell the 400 health care workers at Hamilton General and Henderson hospital that they're not losing their jobs because of the tax cut? How can you tell the tens of dozens of workers at Wellesley Hospital down the street, where their own chief executive officer has said, and I quote again, "The layoffs are the direct result of the decrease in revenue from the Ministry of Health," how can you tell any of these people that they are not losing their jobs because of your \$5-billion tax cut for the wealthy?

Hon Mr Eves: Quite simply because they're not. We have not introduced any tax cut to date. What we have done is try to get a handle on the legacy of deficit and debt left to us by the two parties opposite. That's what we've done. We have to get a grip on the fact that the province of Ontario that we inherited on June 8 spends \$1 million more an hour more than it takes in in revenue. Nobody relishes having to stand here and reduce expenditures of the provincial government. I wish we would have inherited an \$11-billion-a-year surplus, but we didn't. We inherited an \$11.2-billion deficit, and we have to do something about that. We owe it to the people of Ontario and future generations of Ontarians.

1400

Mrs McLeod: That is sheer, unadulterated nonsense coming from a minister whose fiscal plan is to add \$20 billion to the debt while thousands and thousands of Ontario workers are laid off—sheer nonsense.

Minister, let me make it as pointed as I possibly can. Number one, you are bringing in a tax cut that will cost a minimum of \$5 billion a year. Number two, in order to fund that tax cut, you have broken your election promise not to cut health care spending and you have chopped more than \$1 billion from the budgets of our hospitals. Number three, because of those cuts, because of more than \$1 billion taken out of our hospitals' budgets, hospitals are firing tens of thousands of nurses, lab technologists and other vital health care workers.

These are not isolated cuts. Hospital administrators are telling us that your cuts will cost 20,000 jobs at least over the next three years, and clearly the money that is going towards your tax cuts is coming on the backs of the nurses, the health technicians and the patients of this province. So I ask you again, Minister, how can you pretend that these 20,000 health care workers are not losing their jobs in order to finance your tax cut for the wealthy?

Hon Mr Eves: Because they're not. We have not done anything about a tax cut to date, and every measure that we have taken to date as a government is to get the overspending of the previous two administrations under control. What we inherited on June 8 was a government in the province of Ontario that spent \$9 billion a year on interest costs alone to service the debt that largely you two created in the past 10 years.

We inherited a government that was spending \$7.3 billion a year on all hospitals in the province of Ontario put together, but the previous administration thought it was more important to spend \$9 billion in interest costs—\$7.3 billion was the priority they put on hospitals.

The previous government was spending \$8.8 billion a year on education, from the elementary system through to and including post-secondary education, colleges and universities. The previous administration obviously thought it was more important to spend \$9 billion a year in interest payments than spend \$8.8 billion on the education system in the province.

I know they find it difficult to believe. We have not borrowed one red cent to service the tax cut. We have had to borrow money to accommodate the \$100 billion in accumulated debt, the legacy of debt left to us by the two previous administrations.

Mrs McLeod: Two facts: The first fact is that \$5 billion to \$6 billion of the \$8 billion in cuts which you're making are to pay for the tax cut. The second fact, Minister, is that you promised not to cut health care, but you need your cuts fast to fund the tax cut you want to bring into your May budget so you've cut the hospital budget by \$1.3 billion.

I guess, Minister, the most disturbing thing for me is that there is no one in your government—not the Premier, not you, not the Minister of Health—who will even acknowledge that these cuts are having an effect on the quality of health care that all of us receive. So let me tell you, Minister, that when a person at the emergency department in a major teaching hospital in downtown Toronto has to wait four hours for test results because there's only one technician in the lab at night instead of two, that's not efficient health care that you say you're trying to provide; that's just bad health care. When an

elderly woman with terminal cancer presses a button to signal a nurse and it takes an average of 25 minutes for a nurse to arrive, that's not efficient health care; that is bad health care. When a hospital has a ratio of one nurse for 11 patients in a ward with cancer patients and post-operative patients, that is not efficient health care; that is bad health care.

I ask you again, Minister: How can you justify the devastation that is being wreaked on our health care system? How can you justify the tens of thousands of lost jobs and the delayed time for testing and for caring, all in the name of a \$5-billion tax cut for the wealthiest Ontarians?

Hon Mr Eves: We have made a commitment that we are going to live up to with respect to an envelope of funding for health care in the province of Ontario, and I would advise the leader of the official opposition to wait until she sees the budget document this spring before she says something that she may live to regret once the budget document comes out with respect to the level of health care expenditures in the province for this year and next year.

I find it passing strange to see the leader of the official opposition's attitude. "Lower taxes equals more jobs"—I'm reading from a commitment called The Lyn McLeod Commitment to Jobs and Growth. "Lower taxes equals more jobs. Problem: Ontario's rising tax burden is cited by business as the province's number one job killer. Currently, the provincial government takes more money out of Ontario's private sector than do competing US jurisdictions.... Paying higher taxes than their international competitors is the last thing struggling Ontario companies can afford."

That was her position then: Lower taxes equalled more jobs. Obviously, she's again changed her position.

COMMENTS OF SOLICITOR GENERAL

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question of the Solicitor General. Regretfully—I mean that sincerely—I want to return to questions and exchanges that occurred in this House yesterday and in the last couple of days. The Solicitor General has made it clear that the comments he made were, in his terms, "personal opinion" and were "taken out of context" on issues that may be before the office of the police complaints commissioner, these comments that could indeed, in our view and in the view of many, prejudice the outcome of that investigation. I know the Solicitor General may disagree with that, but I do agree with his view that he shouldn't be commenting on an issue before the police complaints commissioner.

His initial comments on Wednesday going into cabinet were, "I don't want to say anything publicly," and then later, "I'm going to let everyone reach their own conclusions." Unfortunately, he did not stop there. He kept on talking. He admitted that he had met senior OPP officials, had viewed the confidential police tape, and every comment he made after that must have been influenced by what he saw on the videotapes. Taking that into account, does the Solicitor General not agree that he has clearly biased the proceedings of the office of the police complaints commissioner? If he does agree with that, obviously the only step he should take, and must

take, is to step aside while that investigation is ongoing. Is the Solicitor General prepared to do that?

Hon Bob Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): Based on the concerns expressed by the third party, I did review the transcript, and I completely disagree with the conclusions he's drawn from the comments I made.

Mr Wildman: The statements are a matter of public record. Yesterday in the House, and I think outside the House, the Solicitor General maintained that any comments he made were not on the subject of complaints before the police complaints commissioner. The minister can't have it both ways. Either he doesn't know what the complaints are, as the Attorney General I think argued, and if he doesn't know what they are he cannot then know that his comments had nothing to do with those complaints or, if he knows his comments had nothing to do with those complaints, he must know what the complaints are. Which is it?

Hon Mr Runciman: I was speaking in a general sense, and it did not deal with any specific complaint. I'm unaware of specific complaints, and any comments I made have no bearing on any specific complaints.

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Mr Wildman: The minister has maintained that his comments were simply personal opinion. The Solicitor General doesn't seem to understand that as a minister, particularly a minister responsible for the administration of justice and policing in the province, he cannot have a personal opinion which is somehow separate from his role as Solicitor General.

Yesterday in this House he also admitted to making inappropriate statements about another case, and in doing so I believe that he undermined the administration of justice in this province and specifically undermined his colleague the Attorney General, the current Attorney General. He commented on the Galligan report, and in doing so I believe tainted the administration of justice in this province, and so, regretfully, I call on the Solicitor General to do the honourable thing and to resign. Is he prepared to do that?

Hon Mr Runciman: We have an independent police complaints commission that will deal with the complaints that have been lodged before them. The House leader of our party has announced a public inquiry to deal with the issues surrounding last Monday's regrettable occurrences, and I think the matter will rest there.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the Deputy Premier. I'm very troubled by the lack of comment or action being taken by the leadership of your government with respect to the matters we've been raising relating to the conduct of the Solicitor General. I'm troubled because on Monday in this House the Premier stood in his place and seemed confused about the matter, seemed to relate the questions to the public inquiry, as opposed to the very specific matters that we've been raising with respect to the matters before the police complaints commission.

Deputy Premier, I want to know why you are unconcerned. Are you unconcerned because you don't believe it is a problem for the Solicitor General to offer a personal opinion on matters related to policing or to

justice in this province, matters that are under investigation? Or are you unconcerned because you believe that his personal opinions he has offered don't relate to the matters under investigation by the police complaints commission?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): The member will know that we have, number one, made a commitment with respect to a public inquiry with respect to the events of March 18. She will also know that the Solicitor General, I think, has appropriately and adequately responded to questions that have been asked as recently as a few moments ago by her leader in a very direct and sincere manner.

I think the public inquiry will deal with the events of March 18 and the actions of all individuals leading up thereto, and I think the Solicitor General has made it quite clear that any comments he made with respect to the activities of that day were based on his own personal knowledge of the events of that day.

Ms Lankin: You see, Deputy Premier, the Solicitor General of this province is not allowed to have public personal opinions. He can't express his personal opinions about matters that are under investigation related to the police or to the justice system in a public way.

Deputy Premier, this is about a question of leadership of this government and the conduct of a cabinet minister holding a very sensitive portfolio. I put it to you that the Attorney General said very clearly yesterday, in fact let me quote to you, "Further, it is important to note that no one has any information about the individual complaint filed, no one knows who filed those complaints, no one knows the nature of those allegations."

Yet the Solicitor General continues to suggest, even if we are to believe that the opinions he has offered are only based on his own experience of that day, that it will have no bearing on the complaints that have been filed before the police complaints commission, the complaints which we do not know the nature of, we do not know the allegations contained therein, we do not know who filed them, we do not know with respect to what matters, whether or not in fact they are the same matters that the Solicitor General says he's offering a personal opinion on.

Deputy Premier, you need to show leadership here. Justice must not only be done, justice must be seen to be done. Your Solicitor General has in fact put a cloud over these complaints. It is imperative that you take action; it is imperative that you look into this; it is imperative that you request the Solicitor General to step aside while you're doing so.

Hon Mr Eves: It is my understanding, number one, that the Solicitor General did not comment on any specific case or cases; and number two, as the Attorney General said in this House yesterday, the police complaints commission is totally independent of the Solicitor General of this province.

Mr Wildman: Not any more.

Hon Mr Eves: Yes it is, with all due respect, I say to the members opposite, and that body will determine those complaints. It has nothing to do with the Solicitor General's office. It does not report to the Solicitor General.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Final supplementary.

Ms Lankin: I must say to the Deputy Premier that he shows a lack of understanding of the process. The complaints before the police complaints commission will be reviewed, will be reported out to the commissioner of the OPP, who reports directly to the Solicitor General. Your Solicitor General has offered comments on things he experienced personally, and quite frankly things that he says were related to the OPP videos. There is a standard of conduct here, and the leadership of the government must be responsible for the conduct of the Solicitor General, for the conduct of ministers of the crown.

Let me read to you the standard of conduct that this minister thought was appropriate to read into the Hansard on May 29, 1989. Mr Runciman read into the Hansard, relating back to the days of 1978 and the resignation of George Kerr, the then Solicitor General:

"At the time, he said, 'I am the political head of the police in Ontario, and like Caesar's wife, I've got to be above reproach.' As he put it in his letter of resignation to the Premier, 'As the senior law officer of the crown, I am wholly conscious of the fact that there can be no suggestion of impropriety on my part that could in any way reflect upon the administration of justice and law enforcement.'"

Deputy Premier, that's the standard of conduct that this minister believed was appropriate then. He should believe it is appropriate now. You are here in place of the Premier today. Please rise in your place and indicate that you will investigate this, that you will review this, and that you will ask the Solicitor General to step aside from his responsibilities as a minister of the crown while you do this so that the people can see there is faith and integrity in the administration of justice.

Hon Mr Eves: The Solicitor General has done nothing to disturb the independence and the credibility of the investigations going on by the police complaints commission. As a matter of fact, it was the commissioner of the OPP who referred the matter, it is my understanding, to the police complaints commission. They are an independent body, they will come to an independent conclusion, and out of that will come some recommendations which I trust will be implemented.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): My question is to the Minister of Transportation, who has heard me raise this issue several times with him in the past few months.

Provincial roads in eastern Ontario are not only hazardous to vehicles but also to the personal safety of motorists, and many of my constituents found that out last week.

Nathalie and Réal Campeau of Cornwall were driving on the 401 near Long Sault when two of their tires were blown after hitting several huge potholes. As a result of the tire blowouts, the Campeaus lost control, hit the median and their truck flipped over. Fortunately, their injuries were not life-threatening, but the loss of the vehicle may cost Nathalie her new job, since she will no longer have transportation, which her job requires.

In the early 1990s, MTO slashed road repair spending from \$580 million to \$400 million. In 1994-95, the ministry only spent \$202 million, and the auditor's report stated that 60% of the highways are in poor or substandard condition. Your government has cut another \$50 million out of the budget alone.

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When will this Minister of Transportation recognize that personal injury is too high a price to pay for expenditure control in road maintenance, and when will he commit to fixing these hazardous roads in Ontario?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): I certainly want to thank the honourable member for the question. It's a very good question and certainly we are concerned with the state of our infrastructure. As the auditor has addressed it, we must put more money into our highway system because it is the vital—

Interjections.

Hon Mr Palladini: If the members across the road—and I use the word "road"—would like to hear, maybe they should stop talking and listen. You asked the question. I want to give you the answers. Thank you very much.

One of the things we must do is put money back in the infrastructure; we recognize the importance. Unfortunately, because of the type of winter we had this year, potholes might become more prominent. There is a strike going on. We do not have the workers to address some of those potholes that we might have been able to address.

I want to say to the honourable member that I have every intention in addressing these problems and making sure that our highway system is—

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): You're cutting the funding.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member for Oriole is out of order.

Hon Mr Palladini: —industry as well as our citizens.

Mr Cleary: That answer I think is full of bullfeathers. The minister knows right well that I had spoken to him about the condition of the roads even before the strike. Highways 2, 401, 417 and others are in terrible shape. I have not been able to get from the minister an answer as to what he is going to do before he transfers Highway 2 back to a municipal responsibility and some more downloading. Community-minded citizens have been painting warnings around the potholes, which are six inches deep, in order to alert motorists.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): That what it says on your paper, John?

Mr Cleary: And the member across the way knows full well about that, the member for S-D-G.

In addition to the Campeaus, I had a visit from a lady from the Solicitor General's riding last week whose tires were blown in the same area after hitting a pothole, and the same week Lee MacEachern was driving on 417 when he hit a pothole and is \$1,000 poorer for his experience. Also, another vehicle in the area hit a pothole and went under a transport.

The highways are in desperate need of repairs. The Tory government in the mid-1990s wants to bring us

back into the 1940s and 1950s with some of their policies, but needs to realize that the safety of Ontarians should be put first—just to add \$20 billion of borrowed money to the debt just to give an irresponsible tax break to the wealthiest Ontarians.

When will the government come clean with the municipal councils in eastern Ontario and work out a solution on Highway 2 and fix the other provincial roads in eastern Ontario?

Hon Mr Palladini: The member would like to have the people of Ontario believe that it is a Mike Harris government that's caused all the potholes. We have been in government nine months. It was the NDP and your government that didn't put the money back in the infrastructure when they should have. Now the fault is Mike Harris's government. He would like the people of Ontario to believe just that.

Let me say about the transferring of highways. It is for that reason that we want to make sure that whatever transfers are done are done in an orderly fashion so we can put money back in the provincial highway infrastructure to make sure we can move people and goods around. That is our commitment. And as far as transfers are concerned, we are going to do them in an orderly fashion.

COMMENTS OF SOLICITOR GENERAL

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is for the Deputy Premier. Yesterday, Monday and today we've heard the Solicitor General and the Attorney General and then today you all acknowledge, first of all, that there had been complaints about the March 18 incident filed in front of the police complaints commission. We also heard you all excuse the Solicitor General's behaviour in commenting on what happened on that day when those complaints had been filed by saying that he qualified his remarks as being events he personally observed.

As the head of the government in the Legislature, I would like you to explain what the position of your government is with respect to the administration of justice as to when it's appropriate for a minister of the crown to make any kind of comment, personal or otherwise, on an issue that's before a quasi-judicial body, that's under a police investigation or that's before a court.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): As I said, it's my understanding that the Solicitor General did not refer to any particular case before the police complaints commission. The police complaints commission is a body that is independent of the Solicitor General. He has explained the context of his remarks, and there is a public inquiry into all other aspects of the events of March 18.

Mrs Boyd: The Deputy Premier just continues to repeat, and I would say to compound, the error of integrity that has been committed by the Solicitor General. It appears that all of the leadership of the government are saying that even though they don't know what the complaints are, they have no idea what incidents they covered, they have no idea what the issues are—although this minister made very direct comments, first of all, about whether or not official warnings were given, and

warnings, as the Attorney General will tell you, are extremely important in terms of due process. He made comments about other groups, and he named those other groups, after watching confidential OPP tapes, as being responsible, and not OPSEU; he named that. How do you know they are not the subject of complaints?

So I would say to you, since you are unwilling to understand that this is a very serious issue which has the danger of calling into disrepute the administration of justice in this province, and since you refuse to understand the seriousness of this with respect to the police complaints commission, will you assure this House and the people of Ontario that the behaviour and the conduct and the integrity of the Solicitor General will be one of the terms of reference for the public inquiry?

Hon Mr Eves: I repeat again, the police complaints commission is independent of the Solicitor General. The Solicitor General has explained the context of his remarks. I gave you a commitment with respect to all other events and matters with respect to and leading up to March 18. That is the way it is.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): My question is for the minister without portfolio responsible for workers' compensation reform. In mid-February, the Honourable Cam Jackson met with a large group of injured workers in Stevensville, Ontario, home of the Tim Hudak Action Centre. One of these workers, Silvana Turner, was injured in a car accident. She claimed on her WCB because she wanted the opportunity to return to work once she had recuperated. After the WCB terminated her benefits in January, Ms Turner felt she would have been better off claiming the accident on her car insurance instead.

My question to the minister is on behalf of the injured workers he met with personally in my office, the rest of the workers of Niagara South, as well as those others around the province the minister has met with recently. Minister, in your consultations, are you hearing from other injured workers across this province the kinds of problems and frustrations experienced by my constituent Silvana Turner?

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Workers' Compensation Board]): I'd like to thank the member for Niagara South not only for the question but because he has taken a very active interest in injured workers in his riding and done a considerable amount of accessing programs for his constituents in this regard.

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His constituent Silvana Turner raised a very interesting question about the options for persons injured in a car accident or on their way to work or during the course of employment. Silvana Turner's experience was quite interesting because of the fact that she felt, upon reflection upon how she'd been treated during the adjudication process, what medical supports were available, what she felt she was denied, that in fact there was a better way of providing the services under workers' compensation or a better service could be applied with her auto insurance.

So I was pleased when she wrote a letter, both to the member and myself, where she indicated, and I quote

from her letter to me, "The current majority government that was elected by the people should take a long, hard look at the workers' compensation program and its debt load and revise it to its original intention, which was to help people that are incapable of work because of an accident." That is exactly what this government is doing.

Mr Hudak: I'd like to thank the minister for his interest in Ms Turner and other similar injured workers across the province and for his personal interest in the workers in my riding.

As a supplementary, Mr Minister, I think you'll remember that when you met with the injured workers in Niagara South in February they expressed concerns that the WCB's current approach to physical and vocational rehabilitation has not been effective in helping injured workers in their efforts to return to work. Could you tell me, Mr Minister, is this what you've been hearing from injured workers not only in Niagara South but in the rest of the province?

Hon Mr Jackson: Yes, it is what I have been hearing from injured workers. In fact, I was in the riding of the leader of the official opposition several weeks ago, and I spent about three and a half hours in her riding meeting and listening to injured workers to have a better—

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): And they're very upset with what you're doing.

Hon Mr Jackson: Well, they are quite aware that this government is listening to injured workers. They expressed concern about voc rehabilitation programs in this province, and they're concerned, for example, about the value for money at institutions like Downsview. The spending on voc rehab in this province has more than doubled, from \$200 million in 1987 to \$459 million in 1994, yet the unemployment rate for injured workers remains at about 50%. This is a record that we, as a province, cannot be proud of.

That is why, upon the suggestion of two of the constituents from the north, in Thunder Bay, who mentioned that we should be looking at other positive examples of cooperative models for rehab, I took their suggestion. Both Steve Mantis and George Casey, an ironworker in Thunder Bay, recommended that we invite someone from the state of Germany to present some of the concerns and best practices in European models. I'm pleased to report to the House that Mr Manfred Rentrop, a senior official with the German government, will be here tomorrow for our International Forum on Workers' Compensation, Health and Safety.

MYALGIC ENCEPHALOMYELITIS AND CHRONIC FATIGUE SYNDROME

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): I have a question for a minister who has some authority in the cabinet. My question is for the Minister of Health, a real minister. The question that I have to the minister who is cutting and gutting is I ask him to remember back to May 1994 when he stood in this House and made a statement on a very serious issue. I want him to know that I have been contacted by the Myalgic Encephalomyelitis Association of Ontario. For those who are unaware, this is chronic fatigue syndrome, also known as ME.

You said, and I quote the minister's words when he was health critic and cared about appropriate care and treatment for the people of this province, or seemed to, "Very little is known about this painful and debilitating disease." He said that over 10,000 individuals suffer from ME, and he called upon the provincial government to take action because, notwithstanding the fact that it had taken the NDP government eight months to establish an environmental clinic, Mr Wilson said that was inadequate, and he urged the government to take immediate action to convene a promised provincial advisory committee on non-specific disorders and to initiate an epidemiological surveillance to evaluate the extent of ME and the potential crisis in Ontario.

I would ask him today to tell us what he has done in the over-eight months that he has been Minister of Health to address this issue of importance to those who suffer from chronic fatigue syndrome and ME.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): Well, it's a very good question from the member for Oriole. I can only reiterate, as I said in the House back in May 1994, that the group we're trying to get together, that she mentions, is on track and we'll be making announcements about that this year; that the commitments we made in the past are on track; and that there are some other topics—if she wants to bring them up. We also made a commitment to the Alzheimer's society that we're also working on, and I'm sure they'll approach her soon on that.

I've been very, very busy, I say to the honourable member for Oriole, and this government's been very busy. We've done more perhaps in the first nine months of government than most governments do in four or five years. And I want to tell you, on a very human level, that if we make commitments, if I make commitments as health critic, if commitments were made during the campaign, this government is fully committed to living up to everything we said we would do for the people of Ontario. I appreciate your reminding us from time to time and prodding us along; but with respect, for people suffering with ME, I fully intend to live up to those commitments.

Mrs Caplan: This minister has done more to cut and gut health services in this province, I will agree with him. He has done more to damage health services in this province than any minister in the history of this province.

I would also say to him that there are many of those who are in need of appropriate care who are unable to find that care. That is because he has cut \$1.3 billion, and that we haven't seen a forecast of 20,000 jobs over the next three years, layoffs from the hospitals of this province, and the minister knows full well that those are the people who provide the services to patients, those are the people who keep our hospitals clean and safe for the people of this province.

So to have him stand in his place and give a patronizing answer to a serious issue like ME is unacceptable, and I would say shame to him. And I would say to him: Who is on your advisory committee? When is it going to be established? This is a very serious issue for people suffering from chronic fatigue syndrome. You took it seriously when you were on this side of the House.

You've been there for eight months, all you've been doing is cutting. When are you going to get on with doing something positive and putting in place those things that you advocated for when you were on this side of the House? Stand up and say when.

Hon Mr Wilson: What I will do is stand up and correct the honourable member. We have not cut one penny from health care in this province. The budget was \$17.4 billion when we arrived in office, it's \$17.4 billion today, and it will be through to the next election, as per our commitment.

I would remind people that this little book talked about health care, this talked about health care at \$17 billion in some 10 locations in this bill. So I ask the honourable member, you would have started your term as health minister, had you won the last election, by cutting \$400 million from health care in this province. That's not the route we've taken, and we're fully living up to all of our commitments including—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order. New question, third party, the member for London Centre.

Interjections.

The Speaker: The individual who used that word "lied," I would appreciate if he would withdraw.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Would the member withdraw?

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Did the member use the word?

Interjections: No.

The Speaker: Order. Whoa. I'm asking the member. If he didn't use it, then that's fine.

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COMMENTS OF SOLICITOR GENERAL

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is to the Attorney General. You are the chief law officer of the crown in this province and you have very special duties under the Attorney General's act, duties that no other member of the cabinet has. Those duties are to administer the justice system in this province and to ensure that it doesn't fall into disrepute, to ensure that the Charter of Rights and Freedoms that is there in the Constitution for us all pertains to everyone impartially within this province. So I would like to ask you the question that I asked the political head of your government, who gave me a political answer.

I would like to ask you what, in your opinion as the Attorney General of this province, you think is appropriate in terms of comments made by a minister of the crown in the face of a police investigation, a quasi-judicial tribunal or a court. Is it ever appropriate, and if so, when, for a minister of the crown to deal with issues publicly that are in front of those bodies?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I will say again there have been no comments made about any specific case, and I will also say that in this province we have an independent police complaints commissioner. That independent police complaints commissioner will investigate these issues and the complaints that have been put before him in an independent way and that will be done.

Mrs Boyd: It is very clear, as it was yesterday, as it was Monday, that this government has different standards for itself and different standards for anyone else who has ever been in government, and that's very serious because in fact what is happening here is a claim that they do not know what's in front of the police complaints commission, but nothing that the Solicitor General said could possibly be inappropriate with something in front of that commission. This is absolute nonsense.

The minister made it very clear that he was commenting, first of all, on whether or not the OPP gave adequate warning. We've repeated those again and again in Hansard. I'm not going to do it again. He admitted that he had seen confidential OPP tapes and that he was making these judgements as a result of that observation which he made only because of his privilege and his responsibility as the head of the OPP. He made allegations that he was not making any judgement against OPSEU, but he was making judgements about a number of other groups that he said, according to the tapes, were responsible for the disorder that occurred.

It is impossible for me to believe that the Attorney General really believes that none of those issues will be part of an investigation by the police complaints commission. I want to make it very clear to the Attorney General, we are in no way impugning the independence or the integrity of the police complaints commissioner, Judge Lapkin—in no way at all. We are simply saying to the Attorney General, how can you continue to defend and attempt to whitewash the behaviour of your colleague who is calling the administration of justice in this province into disrepute when that is your major responsibility as Attorney General?

Hon Mr Harnick: The issue is the investigation and the proper investigation by the police complaints commissioner of the individual complaints that have been filed with him. I have no doubt, because of the nature of his independent position and because he will investigate independently, that those complaints before the police complaints commissioner are not going to be prejudiced in any way. There will be an independent investigation. That is the duty of the independent police complaints commissioner and he will do his job as statute obligates him to do.

SCHOOL BUS TRANSPORTATION

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I have a question for the Minister of Agriculture. Last night, the Peel Board of Education introduced a motion at its board which essentially cuts off all busing in the region of Peel. As you know, I represent the north half of the region of Peel, the town of Caledon, and stopping all busing in this area will certainly have a devastating effect on the town of Caledon because we essentially do not have a busing system, a municipal system.

My question to the minister is whether he's aware of the current situation and what dialogue he's had with representatives from the Peel Board of Education concerning school bus service in rural areas such as Caledon.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): The member for Dufferin-Peel has asked a

question which is very serious for the residents of Peel, and I know there have been many people who have attended a public meeting recently to take up this subject.

In answer to the question, I have had several conversations in the past few months with the chairperson of that board and I've also had a chance to have conversations with the representatives of the provincial bodies that represent the school boards across the province. In fact, that includes the people who represent the Ontario Public School Boards' Association. Those folks agree with this government that we need to change our education system in this province, that we need to protect the quality of education while at the same time finding savings in our costs outside of the classroom.

In order to enhance both the local flexibility at the bargaining table and the local flexibility of boards of education, we recently announced measures that would assist local boards in doing just that, including a new block grant approach to our transportation grants.

We believe that transportation costs can be reduced, and board associations agree as well, through transportation logistics including coterminous cooperation, which I know Dufferin-Peel and the Peel boards have been doing for the last couple of years, but also through staggered start and finish times for schools so that we can have two and three times the utilization for bus equipment and by using computer modelling.

Peel's transportation grant reduction next year will amount to about 1% of the transportation costs, and I believe those kinds of savings can be found in the methodology that I've just described.

Mr Tilson: This move by the Peel Board of Education, in my opinion, will place an unfair burden on the parents and the students of my riding, which is Caledon. Specifically as well it will set a precedent to school boards around the province to bring forward similar motions instead of looking at internal cost savings. In other words, if you happen to live near a school, you don't pay, but if you live on a farm or out in the country, you have to pay dearly.

My final question to the Minister of Agriculture—I keep saying “Minister of Agriculture”—to the Minister of Education is, what solutions is the minister prepared to offer to ensure that bus service is not dropped in rural areas of Peel and across the province? How can he assure that there will be universal access to education across this province?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I understand that the honourable member might have a problem. The Minister of Agriculture and I do look a lot alike, and so occasionally everyone makes that sort of mistake.

Mr Tilson: You're better-looking by far.

Hon Mr Snobelen: I want to inform the member that transportation is not a mandated service in the province of Ontario. The Education Act says that boards “may” provide transportation service. This allows for a lot of local flexibility and for school boards to meet local requirements which, as the member has pointed out, are different in rural and urban areas.

I want to inform the member that if the response of a board to about a 1% reduction in transportation grants, or money available for transportation, is either to charge a

user fee or to completely eliminate the service, then my ministry will reconsider all of the transportation funding provided to that board. In the case of the Peel board that the member has brought up, that would amount to about \$4 million.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I indicate dissatisfaction with the answer of the Attorney General and request a late show. I'll file the appropriate papers by the end of the day.

1450

PETITIONS

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

“Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

“We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services.”

I have affixed my signature.

RENT REGULATION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have a petition to Premier Mike Harris, Minister Al Leach and members of the Ontario Legislature:

“Whereas Mike Harris's Conservative government of Ontario is planning to destroy the present system of rent control;

“Whereas Mike Harris and the Conservative Party made no mention of scrapping rent control during the election campaign of 1995 or in the Common Sense Revolution document;

“Whereas a number of Conservative candidates in ridings with high tenant populations campaigned during the 1995 election on a platform of protecting the current rent control system;

“Whereas the government has consulted with special-interest groups representing landlords and developers while cutting funding to organizations representing the 3.5 million tenants of Ontario;

“Whereas although all renters will suffer, seniors and others on fixed incomes will suffer particular hardship if rent controls were abolished;

"Whereas eliminating rent control will result in skyrocketing rents in Ontario;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislature of Ontario to stop the attack on the 3.5 million tenants of this province."

I will affix my signature to this petition.

ABORTION

Mr Gerry Martiniuk (Cambridge): I rise pursuant to standing order 36 to present a petition on behalf of 587 good citizens of Cambridge and area, including members of the Women's Christian Temperance Union and local churches. It reads:

"We commend the provincial government for seeking to cut unnecessary spending. We, the undersigned, who represent Cambridge and area churches, urge Premier Mike Harris to cut abortion funding. Our Christian conscience is violated when our taxes are used to fund abortions."

I affix my name on there pursuant to the standing orders.

CHILD CARE

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I have a petition from the Rural Family Resource Centre, parents who are very concerned about the provision of day care. The petition reads:

"As a parent-caregiver using the services of the Rural Family Resource Centre, I am concerned about future budget cuts to family resource programs. I urge you to maintain funding to these programs so that rural families can continue to access this essential service."

I'm proud to sign my name to this petition.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have here a petition from the coalition of tenants' associations in the Hamilton area that has been doing a lot of work in order to be able to gather signatures in opposition to the government's plan to scrap rent control. The petition reads:

"Whereas security of tenure or the right to remain in our homes is a basic need of all humans; and

"Whereas uncontrolled rent increases force many tenants from their homes for both economic and other reasons; and

"As the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Premier of Ontario have both expressed publicly their desire to abolish rent control;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to protect the security of tenure of Ontario tenants by ensuring that rent control remains in effect in this province."

I've proudly signed this petition with these people.

SCARBOROUGH GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I present a petition on behalf of a number of residents of Scarborough. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the recommendations of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council to close inpatient paediatric beds, the special care nursery and the burn unit at Scarborough General Hospital resulting in significantly reduced access to paediatric, newborn, and burn care for a large geographic area of Scarborough; and

"Whereas the paediatric unit, special care nursery and burn unit at Scarborough General Hospital provide very cost-effective, quality care,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to (1) continue paediatric services, including inpatient paediatric beds; (2) continue special care nursery services; (3) continue and combine Metropolitan Toronto's burn care at Scarborough General Hospital."

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

PUBLIC LIBRARIES

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): I have a petition signed by 147 residents of eastern Ontario and it calls for the government to continue full funding to public libraries.

"Whereas the Premier of Ontario, the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, as well as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, have made statements that suggest the provincial government intends to repeal the Public Libraries Act in order to impose fees for the use of public libraries, to eliminate provincial conditional grants to public libraries, and to eradicate public library boards; and...

"Whereas public libraries make too important a contribution to the ongoing economic strength and quality of life in Ontario for these principles to be cast aside,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"To oppose the repeal of the Public Libraries Act, the imposition of fees for the use of public libraries, the elimination of provincial conditional grants to public libraries, the eradication of library boards, and to support free public libraries as the foundation of a literate, informed and prosperous population."

I have also signed my name to this petition.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): I have a petition from Freedom to Move. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"Transportation Minister Al Palladini is proposing legislation that will cost many towns their bus service.

"Bus companies are currently required to provide service for smaller towns as a condition of being given the rights to high-profit routes and charter markets. Minister Palladini's plan to deregulate will eliminate all conditions and requirements. As a result, hundreds of smaller communities like ours"—in Manitouwadge, for instance—"will lose bus service.

"Minister, people in smaller towns need bus service just as much as people in big cities. We depend upon buses to visit friends and family, to get to appointments in nearby towns, to ship our Christmas presents and to receive our repair parts. The undersigned call upon the members of the Legislative Assembly"—all of us—"to

oppose bus deregulation and the elimination of our bus service."

It's signed by concerned citizens and of course I have affixed my name to that petition.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): On Friday, I was approached by three representatives of the OPSEU organization who asked me to pass on a petition signed by a number of residents of the Niagara Peninsula. I'll oblige their request and read it into the record on their behalf. After a preamble, the conclusion is:

"We, the following citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to abandon the selloff of Ontario public services and reinstate successor rights for public service employees."

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario which reads:

"Whereas the Minister of Education and Training has gone on record stating that the government is deeply committed to an educational system that delivers excellence and that the government has acknowledged that the public wants a highly educated, highly motivated and highly trained workforce that is a result of providing an absolutely first-class education to our young people, and that the government is going to deliver on these needs expressed by the public;

"Whereas Stats Canada data places Ontario sixth in spending per pupil after the northern territories, Quebec, Manitoba and BC, yet the government has announced a \$400-million cut in educational funding for the 1996 school year;

"Whereas these cuts will translate into a reduction in support to students, a reduction in teacher contact with students, and create a school environment that will not promote the ideal stated above, contrary to what the public expects,

"Therefore we, the undersigned, urge the Legislature of Ontario to withdraw this damaging underfunding of Ontario's educational system and to refrain from making changes which affect the delicate balance between teachers and school boards."

I have 300 signatures, and I will affix my name to this petition as well.

1500

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I have a petition from some good, hardworking residents of my constituency.

"By means of this petition we, the employees of Gogama Forest Products Ltd and all other persons travelling our provincial highways, do not agree with the government's decision to reduce the number of highway snow-clearing and sanding vehicles in the province, but more specifically, those located in the Shining Tree and Gogama patrol area.

"It is felt that the lack of the aforementioned equipment in these areas will greatly jeopardize the safety of

those travelling the highways this winter. We must travel Highways 144 and 560 on a daily basis to get to work and the employees and their family members rely heavily on the highways being maintained on an ongoing basis, allowing all to reach their destinations safely.

"Your government must realize and take into consideration that the highways in southern Ontario are not the same in northern Ontario and concessions or adjustments must be made to accommodate the differences."

I agree with this petition and have affixed my name thereto.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES

Mr Tim Hudak (Niagara South): I also have in my possession a group of letters presented to me.

"I urge the government to sit down with the public service workers to find ways to cut costs while safeguarding the services needed."

I'd like to enter it into the record.

TRANSITION HOUSE

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Transition House in Chatham has provided emergency shelter to troubled or abused youth as well as support, counselling and life skills training since 1990, and, operating on a five-year budget of \$865,000, they have counselled over 400 youth and served over 29,000 meals;

"Whereas the government of Ontario has cut its direct funding to Transition House by almost \$48,000 annually and places the existence of Transition House in jeopardy;

"Be it therefore resolved that we, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to reverse its decision to cut the funding of Transition House in Chatham-Kent."

I affix my signature to it.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Contrary to Minister Jackson's fantasy, here's what workers are really saying about his attacking WCB.

"To the Ontario Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas we, the undersigned, are opposed to your government's proposed changes to Ontario's workers' compensation system, including elimination of the bipartite board of directors, reduced temporary benefits, introduction of the three-day period from the time of injury with no pay, legislated limits on entitlement, thereby excluding repetitive strain, chronic pain and stress claims from eligibility for compensation, reduced permanent pensions and pension supplements; and

"Whereas workers' compensation is not a handout; it is an insurance plan for which premiums are paid, it is a legal obligation that employers have to employees who 80 years ago traded their right to sue employers in return for this insurance plan;

"Therefore, we demand no reduction in existing benefits, improved re-employment and vocational rehabilitation, tightened enforcement of health and safety to prevent injuries, no reduction in current Workers' Com-

pensation Board staff levels and that the bipartite board structure be left intact."

I join the United Food and Commercial Workers in their petition.

COLLEGE OF TEACHERS

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): I have a petition to the Ontario Legislature and it reads as follows:

"Whereas the public secondary teachers of Ontario have taken a workplace democracy vote in accordance with Bill 7 and have rejected the proposed College of Teachers by a 94.8% vote,

"We, the undersigned, urge the provincial assembly to instruct the government to withdraw Bill 31, the Ontario College of Teachers Act, 1995."

ST JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Common Sense Revolution states that a Conservative government will not cut health care; and

"Whereas during the 1995 election campaign the Conservatives clearly promised to defend the health care system by protecting ministry funding, stating in the campaign backgrounder, 'There will be no cuts to health care funding by a Harris government,' and in calling this their first and most important commitment,

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, call on the Minister of Health to reject all recommendations put forward by the Hamilton health task force related to the closing of St Joseph's Hospital and we recommend that no hospitals should close in Hamilton-Wentworth."

RENT REGULATION

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have here a petition from the Federation of Metro Tenants' Associations in regard to rent control, and I commend them on the work that they're doing in getting all these signatures. The petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads:

"To Premier Mike Harris, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Al Leach, and members of the provincial Legislature:

"Whereas to abolish rent controls in favour of a market system would be disastrous for tenants and would give further power to allow unnecessary profit for landlords,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to support universal and mandatory rent controls which reflect a fair balance between the ability of tenants to pay and the necessity of costs of supplying well-maintained and secure housing."

I sign the petition on their behalf.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr Barrett from the standing committee on regulations and private bills presented the committee's report and moved its adoption:

Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr24, An Act respecting TD Trust Company and Central Guaranty Trust Company

Bill Pr41, An Act respecting the City of Scarborough

Bill Pr43, An Act to revive 1092040 Ontario Inc.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Shall this report be received and adopted? Agreed.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Mr Laughren from the standing committee on government agencies presented the committee's sixth report.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Pursuant to standing order 106(g)11, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LAND USE PLANNING AND PROTECTION ACT, 1995

LOI DE 1995 SUR LA PROTECTION ET L'AMÉNAGEMENT DU TERRITOIRE

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for third reading of Bill 20, An Act to promote economic growth and protect the environment by streamlining the land use planning and development system through amendments related to planning, development, municipal and heritage matters / Projet de loi 20, Loi visant à promouvoir la croissance économique et à protéger l'environnement en rationalisant le système d'aménagement et de mise en valeur du territoire au moyen de modifications touchant des questions relatives à l'aménagement, la mise en valeur, les municipalités et le patrimoine.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I'd like to start by thanking my colleague the member for Cochrane South, who is the actual critic for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, for not only splitting his time with me but giving me the lion's share of that time. As the critic for environment and energy, I carried this bill mostly through the committee for our caucus, although I was joined by many members from our caucus.

I want to begin by paying tribute to some folks who were instrumental in the development of Bill 163, which as you know is the bill that's now been completely gutted by this new Bill 20.

In particular, I think it's really important that we commend John Sewell, the former chair of the Commission on Planning and Development Reform in Ontario. People may not be aware of this, but leaving aside whether or not you like what was in the final bill as a result of Mr Sewell's committee, John chaired one of the very few royal commissions in Canada that actually not only reported on time but came in under budget. Not only that, but he saw most of his recommendations, at least at the time, adopted. That's very rare indeed, and I think we should all in this House congratulate Mr Sewell for managing to achieve that mighty feat.

I also want to thank the other members of the commission, Toby Vigod and George Penfold, who spent many

hours of their time. As you will remember, Mr Speaker, of the four years, they spent a couple of years on the road, literally, talking to thousands of people.

Last but not least, I would like to mention the Honourable Ed Philip, who at that time was our Minister of Municipal Affairs. I know he struggled very hard for quite a long time, trying to balance the various interests in the Planning Act. Certainly I remember many conversations around caucus and in cabinet, trying to find that balance. I commend him for sticking to it and coming up with a bill that, in our view, did represent the balance of the views in Ontario. I can't even begin to thank by name the literally hundreds of people from environmental groups, from cottage country, from land use committees, ordinary citizens, the development community, municipalities, all of the people who were so very helpful in developing Bill 163.

1510

I want to look at this new Bill 20 from the perspective of other government environmental deregulation and cuts that have happened, and more to come, because when you don't take this in isolation, but you include it and look at it as part of that whole package, we're going to have total devastation of environmental protection in this province. If the Minister of Environment were here, I would say to her that this is not manufactured hysteria by environmentalists out there, as has been suggested by a spokesperson from her office. I'm going to give a specific example, although there are many, of what I mean. This is really important, because when you combine the Planning Act's controls on land development, the controls that have been taken away, with the defunding of conservation authorities under Bill 26, as we all recall, the omnibus, ominous Bill 26, there were many environmental aspects in that Bill 26.

One of the consequences combined with the consequences of Bill 20 is indeed very serious. That is the defunding of conservation authorities. Certainly, when we were the government it became very clear to us that there needed to be some refining and fine-tuning within the conservation authorities. No doubt about it, some changes had to be made, but this slash-and-burn approach is really wrong.

You have to ask yourself, what do conservation authorities do? Within the context of the Planning Act, they play a very vital role. They manage and protect the province's sensitive wetlands, they help preserve the waterways and help keep the water clean and generally make sure that flood land areas are not developed. Bill 26 takes \$34 million away from the authorities and waters down—excuse the pun here—the existing conservation laws significantly.

When you put that together with reducing transfer payments by almost half to municipalities, there's going to be a real threat that municipalities will also cut funding, because right now there's a partnership wherein the municipalities and the provinces both contribute to conservation authorities. You have to ask yourself as well, with this new Planning Act, where municipalities and developers will not have to adhere to strict environmental controls and the difficult situation financially municipalities and conservation authorities are going to be in, are

municipalities going to make conservation a high priority when they're going to be really desperate for development, whether it's good or bad? Conservation authorities are going to be put in the position where they're going to be selling off sensitive environmental land.

When you again look at the government removing the Niagara tender fruit land protection fund, or whatever that was called—our government put a fund in place to protect this very sensitive, vital farm land in Ontario and as my friend from Niagara region, St Catharines, yesterday spoke most eloquently about, there's very little of that land—

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): He is very eloquent.

Ms Churley: He is very eloquent, most of the time.

He said much more eloquently and in much more detail than I'm going to today, because I certainly won't repeat what he talked about, but he expresses deep concern, and I share that concern, which is why even in tight economic times our government created a fund to encourage and help farmers hold on to this tender fruit land so that it's there in the future, so that we will actually have such an agricultural industry in the future. This bill and the lack of funding to help preserve this land is going to definitely threaten these fruit lands.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): It was just announced there is no fund.

Ms Churley: I see the Minister of Agriculture is here and is arguing with me, but he knows very well about the cuts to agriculture that have already been put in place by this government. The agricultural community isn't fooled. They know what's happening here too, and he is going to have to deal with that down the road.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: We're dealing with it now.

Ms Churley: Yes, he's dealing with it now. I can see that the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs must be on the defensive, because I've only been speaking for a few minutes and he's already heckling me and trying to assure me that there is no problem here. Actually, what he's doing is provoking me. I wasn't going to talk about the tax cuts for a little while yet, but I'll mention it now because it's quite relevant here, and I'll mention it again.

The kinds of cuts that are taking place within the agricultural and rural areas have everything to do with the 30% tax cut that is mainly going to benefit the rich. This government is going to borrow money so that they can put money back in the pockets of rich people. It's obscene.

Mr Gerretsen: And the extremely rich.

Ms Churley: And the extremely rich, absolutely. When this government was in opposition, the few people across the floor who were here in this position at that time used to give our government a hard time for borrowing money to try to keep the economy afloat, to keep the most vulnerable people in our province afloat during the worst recession since the 1930s and to try to create jobs. Somehow it was wrong to borrow money to try to help people during a really bad recession, but somehow for them it's okay to borrow money to give to the rich so

that our children and our grandchildren will be paying a deficit, and the children who are going hungry and who are having trouble surviving today are paying a big price now while you pave the way to give those people a tax cut.

I see that the Minister of Agriculture has at least temporarily left, so I'll get back to my text, now that I've made it clear to him where I stand on what these cuts are all about and how I feel about them.

I'm going to talk about a few areas of the bill that are of particular concern to me. I am going to focus on the environmental aspects of this bill, of which there are many serious consequences, because that is my critic area. That is not to say that I don't have severe concerns about some of the other areas: the lack of public participation—I shouldn't "lack," but this government in the new bill has severely limited the kind of public participation that people are used to and should have. There are all kinds of other areas I have concerns about, and if I have time I'll get to them.

I have no illusions that I'm going to change anybody's minds in the government, except for a few people whose names I won't mention who I think perhaps have some expertise in the planning area and may in fact agree. I won't mention the member for Middlesex or others in the House specifically, but I know that there are some people who have a better understanding of those issues than others, have paid a great deal of attention to what's going on and know that there are some very bad policy changes in this bill that are going to make planning much more difficult. That's the irony of this bill, that is the real irony: It isn't even going to do what the minister says he wants to do. It isn't going to streamline the system.

I know members of the government don't believe me. They think this is rhetoric, because I'm one of these crazy environmentalists and I just want to hold everything up for the sake of holding it up. Not true. That's why we, our government, commissioned the planning commission in the first place, because it was very clear that the existing Planning Act was not working and that we needed something new in place.

1520

I'm going to begin with the title of this bill. I made an amendment at committee level which, I'm sorry to say, was not accepted, but I wasn't surprised. I believe the Liberals supported me on this, at least Mr Bradley did. Let's read the long title of the bill. The short title is Land Use Planning and Protection Act. The long title is, listen to this: An Act to promote economic growth and protect the environment by streamlining the land use planning and development system through amendments related to planning, development, municipal and heritage matters.

My amendment at the committee hearings was—I suppose it's a bit mischievous, but it also tells a story. It should be titled, at least the short title, Destruction of the Environment Act, because the title of this bill in itself is doublespeak and is entirely misleading. There is not a single amendment in Bill 20 to do with environmental protection. The very opposite is true. This bill takes away environmental protections which already exist.

I want to talk about a component of the bill which was a major focus at the committee hearings, and that is

section 3. Section 3 changes the requirement, that planning decisions must "have regard to" provincial policy, from "to be consistent with" provincial policy. I know that those who aren't greatly involved in this issue think this sounds a little strange, a little weird, semantics: "What are they talking about? What's the big difference between 'have regard to' and 'be consistent with'?"

I want to tell you how significant this change is. It strikes at the very heart of this bill, and at committee level, it's true, many, almost all the people who came to speak to us about this bill, spoke to this one issue, because it is at the heart. It's very clear that some people hated it and some people liked it.

I want to tell you, and I want to be very clear on this, that the Sewell commission and our government spent many hours, many months, many discussions about how to sort this out, because it became, when we were in the process of developing our bill, an issue as well.

A lot of research was done by Mr Sewell and others and it became very clear to us that "have regard to" provincial policy had no teeth. What it means is—and it's happened in the past, there are different legal interpretations, there's no clarity to it—that you've got provincial policy, "have regard to," you can pick it up, have a look at it, "No, that doesn't fit with what we want to do here," toss it aside and say, "Yes, we had regard for it, but it doesn't work for us and that's that."

The loss of this change means the loss of a key planning tool and ironically it will work against this government's approach to speeding up the process. I know you don't believe me now, and not everybody agrees. We had a lot of people come to the committee and say the opposite, it's true. At some point you have to make up your own mind. You have to do the research, you have to talk to different sides and you have to try to determine what will work best, if you're looking at it solely from the point of view of trying to speed up the process and make it less complicated.

If you're moving aside from looking at the environmental aspects of it, that's one thing. But looking at speeding up the process, this is only going to bog it down more. You've got to think about the 80% of Ontario's municipalities with populations of less than 5,000 people, with very limited funds and expertise, and even more limited funds now than before.

Members of the government and all the developers and some municipalities think this change will free them from provincial interference in local decision-making. Again I say, on the contrary.

Let me say here—and this is really important to those who have paid any attention to this new planning act and Bill 163 under our government—that we must not confuse the policy guidelines with the policy statements. I think even some members of my own caucus who weren't very involved in the development of this bill confused those guidelines with the policy framework. I will be the first one to say here that those policy guidelines—and that's all they are, they're guidelines; they have no legislative authority—were a mistake. They're very long and they're complicated and I can assure you that had Bill 163 stayed in place, they would have had to be changed. It's unfortunate that so many people confuse those guidelines with the provincial policy framework.

But the policy itself which municipalities and developers would have had to be consistent with used language and policies to help municipalities to say yes to good development and no to bad development. It was a tool to help them, and flexibility was built into the policies. I suggest that people read those policies. For example, such language as "encouraging" or "fostering" certain kinds of development patterns was used.

I can assure you, we had some fights with environmental activists around some of the words in the policy framework. Environmentalists did not get everything they wanted in this bill. Environmentalists wanted things to be much tougher, much more clear in terms of what could and could not be done in the environment. But we made sure that the policy statements were flexible enough that municipalities and developers could, within the context of their own regions, adhere to and be consistent with these rules but be able to work within the framework of their own restrictions.

As a result of this change, I can tell you, and I know, having been a city councillor for a while and also an environmental activist for quite a long time, I can assure you that there'll be more and more protracted site-by-site battles and appeals to the OMB from all sides. That's what happens when you don't have clarity, and that's what this does. It's very important to understand why this became an issue, whether it should be "be consistent with" or not.

Municipalities wanted more autonomy by freeing them from having to always go to the province for approvals. Bill 163 gave them that. The developers who came and spoke to our committee, who were very involved in the development of Bill 163, when I asked them they agreed that Bill 163 did indeed do that, and so did the municipality representatives.

So the trade-off, as a result of giving the municipalities more autonomy, was that the municipalities' plans had to be consistent with provincial policies. As I said, this included broad goals such as protection of environmentally sensitive areas and curbing urban sprawl. That was a trade-off, because the autonomy municipalities wanted was granted. Now what's happened is that that autonomy is there but there's a free-for-all in terms of environmental protection.

Another big area of concern, which has been addressed by some of my colleagues and I'm sure will be mentioned again, is taking away the tools to try to curb urban sprawl. Bill 163 prevented municipalities from stopping two-unit house development. People could go ahead and build two-unit housing. Bill 20 removes that restriction, so the encouragement to compact development, infilling and intensification has gone out the door.

1530

Bill 20 also eliminates provisions to allow apartments in housing, those kinds of provisions. We've gone back to the bad old days where municipalities can determine for themselves whether they're going to allow them, which doesn't make sense.

This is where I can't understand the Tories at all. This is a case where you have the private property owners, the private sector out there, developing affordable housing. You have situations, especially in this economy, where

people want to buy a house but can't afford it unless they're able to rent out a basement apartment to pay their mortgage; or they have a house and somebody's lost a job and they're trying to maintain and keep their house and the only way they can do that is by having an auxiliary apartment; or we have aging parents and we need to be able to find a way to help care for these parents and still give them an opportunity to maintain some kind of independent lifestyle. It allows the private property owner out there to do those things, which is what this Tory government is all about, so they say. But because of pressure from certain municipalities, they caved in and took away a very basic right—

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): AMO.

Ms Churley: Yes, AMO indeed—listened to AMO but didn't listen to the many thousands of people who need this affordable housing, and took away a very basic right. It's very dangerous when provincial senior levels of government only listen to other elected representatives. Sometimes the people themselves need to be talked to directly.

Another big area of concern for me and for my colleagues is the redrawing of the map. I meant to bring one in so I could illustrate it on the map to people; I forgot it. It's where significant wetlands are specifically protected under Bill 163. Under existing NDP policy statements, development is banned from provincially significant wetlands south of the boreal region, and that's almost up to Wawa. But the Tories again in this case—I guess it wasn't AMO they caved to but their developer friends. Now the new policies say you only have to protect wetlands south and east of the Canadian Shield. That means that most of cottage country, where there's some of the most beautiful land and some of the most environmentally sensitive land in our province, will no longer be covered.

Of course there are some provisions that municipalities have to look at these sensitive areas, blah, blah, blah, but if you only have to "have regard for," that can be ignored. The "no means no" policy in this particular region, the cottage country, is no longer the case. I would say that all these people who own cottages and live in that area should be very concerned about the kind of development proposals that are going to come forward. This is where I come back to the fact that when people start hearing about some of those development proposals, there are going to be long and protracted battles before the OMB, because there's a lack of clarity about exactly what the rules say.

As I sat through the hearings it became increasingly clear to me, and we had some discussions about this—I see the parliamentary assistant is here, the member for Oxford—about who was consulted and who wasn't consulted on Bill 20. It's interesting. Today—I asked permission if I could use his name today—I had lunch with a Mr Steve Kaiser, who is the new head of the Urban Development Institute, and he likes this bill, he likes this bill a lot. He thinks it's great for developers. Are you surprised? Although he and I had an agreement on one aspect, an area this bill didn't cover.

One of the things he said to me—and I told him I'd be very careful not to misrepresent him; Steve, if you're

watching, I'll be very careful—was that he was consulted and he was part of the process of the development of Bill 163. He also said that as much as he likes this bill, one of the things that's very important to developers is certainty. I'd better stop quoting him now.

My interpretation of what Mr Kaiser meant is that the kind of policy they want to see in place, they don't want—put it this way. Four years from now—well, now, Mr Kaiser didn't say that, but I say it—this government will no longer be sitting there. I know you guys used to say that to us too, and we used to hate it, but it's going to be true. Face it, many of you sitting here now will not be in this House four years from now. There's going to be a new government over there, and there's going to be tremendous pressure from all the people who were not consulted, were not listened to on this bill, and lousy development is going to start happening.

We're not going to see this right away. It's going to take a few years, as in the past, for the environmental disasters to start showing up and the millions and millions of dollars that our children and our grandchildren are going to—talk about leaving our kids a deficit. This government continues to say, "We're spending"—what is it, the mantra?—" \$1 million an hour on paying off the deficit, and we have to pay it off so that our kids and our grandchildren won't have to be stuck with this big deficit."

If you look at the kind of deficit that you are going to leave your children—don't turn a blind eye to it; it's the reality. It's so shortsighted to try to dig yourself out of this deep hole you dug yourselves in during the election that you're going to get rid of the deficit and you're going to cut taxes by 30%. You were bold enough to even outline it in—I almost said the red book. Sorry, what was it called? The Common Sense Revolution. They were bold enough to even put it in there. It shows right up front that rich people are going to get the lion's share of this money.

In the process of developing that, they talk about not leaving our kids a deficit. We know that there are more deficits than economic deficits. We have seen the results of bad planning in this province time and time again which has literally cost the taxpayers millions and millions of dollars to clean up: contaminated water, mine tailings. It goes on and on. Millions of dollars and bad planning.

Mr Hastings: Oh, oh.

Ms Churley: The member doesn't want to hear this, but he really should listen. I'm talking about the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale. He's not taking this seriously. I understand that. But it is a very serious problem. I know they're not listening. But if there's one thing I could convince them of, it would be to look into the history of environmental damage and the costs to the taxpayers of this province.

Some of it is gone forever. That's the problem with environmental damage. You can pay off a deficit over time. You've got to manage, and you can pay it off. Especially if you don't give a tax cut at the same time, you can deal with it. But once certain environmental damage is done, you can never, never get it back.

Chris Winter, who's the executive director of the Conservation Council of Ontario, said something that I

found extremely telling. He said the environment doesn't care how long it takes to make a decision; it cares what the decision is. That's the crux of the matter here. We have to look beyond just quick, make-a-fast-buck development, because our kids are going to be paying, and our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren. We won't be around. We'll be dead, let's face it. Let's get real here. Our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren will be out there suffering the consequence of bad development, disappearing farm land, more and more pollution from the automobile, which is what this Bill 20 is going to do.
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I want to make it clear that I have no quarrel with Mr Kaiser or with developers. They're a special-interest group. They are one of the few special-interest groups this government listens to. They are. That's okay. They have a right to their opinion; they have a right to represent their constituents, their issues. More power to them. That's what they do.

My quarrel is with this government, because it became increasingly clear throughout the process of these hearings that after our government literally consulted and talked to people for four years, this government within a matter of a few months talked to, consulted with developers and AMO and a few others. I know this because as people came before the committee, I would ask them, if you check Hansard—I didn't ask them all, but I'd ask some, the developers—"Do you like this bill?" "Yes, we like this bill." "Were you consulted on this bill?" "Yes, we were consulted"—a lot, yes. "Did you get what you wanted in this bill?" or words to that effect. "Yes, we're very happy with this bill and the kinds of issues we raised are in there."

Environmental and other citizens' groups who came forward, I would ask the same questions. Totally opposite answer: "No, we were not consulted." "Is there anything about this bill that you like?" "No, not much." "Did the government respond to any of your concerns at all?" "No." There was an absolute dichotomy within those hearings, and you would agree, the member for Kingston and The Islands. He was there for most of the hearings with me. I know the member for Kingston and The Islands agrees with some of the things in the bill.

Mr Gerretsen: I agree.

Ms Churley: That's fine. There are some areas we agree on. But I can assure you there's one thing we agree on, and that is that the other side were not consulted.

We had discussions and some arguments about that in the committee. I remember Ms Kathy Cooper—remember that?—from the Canadian Environmental Law Association. She was in and there was a bit of a kerfuffle over who consulted whom and she got cut off by the member for Bruce, who was doing the vice-chairing at the time. She's not here right now. There was a misunderstanding about who consulted with whom, but Kathy Cooper, who was very involved, spent thousands of volunteer—her group and others—time helping develop 163. They weren't consulted. They were invited to a meeting and that's what the confusion was about.

She thought we were talking about the Minister of Environment—remember?—and it was because she was cut off we weren't able to work that one out, but subse-

quent to that we realized that she had been invited, along with some other environmentalists, to meet with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. There wasn't consultation. Any environmental group—a few did go and meet with him and sit down. It was a get-to-know-you meeting. They were never invited back. They weren't asked to seriously sit down and try to at least work out the areas of their greatest concern. They were completely, absolutely, categorically denied access and this takes us back to the same kind of arrogance that this government has displayed throughout its term in office.

You've got time to change; you can change once you start to realize that this is going to be a problem, because I come back to Mr Kaiser. I come back to another government sitting over there and the fact that you didn't consult and you left so many people out of the process. I can guarantee you there is going to be an onslaught from people who weren't involved in this process who are going to say, "We need changes," and I can guarantee you it's going to be changed again. The member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore is now here and is shaking his head, and I know he's the past chair of the UDI—

Mr Gerretsen: He was president; he's past president.

Ms Churley: Past president. You may have missed this, but I had lunch with Mr Kaiser today and we were talking about certain aspects of this bill.

Mr Gerretsen: They've had two nice guys as presidents.

Ms Churley: Two nice guys now as presidents. In the past the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore has expressed caring concern for the environment. If he knew what was happening in this bill, despite his past with UDI, he would agree with me that there's some really serious—I know he'll be up in his two minutes to tell me that he does agree with me and that he would like to see his government change some of the most draconian aspects of this bill, the parts that are going to affect the environment in a negative way.

Coming back to who was consulted and who wasn't—very dangerous, what you're doing. Even at the end of the day, if the other side—yes, we know, you like the developer. Your friends are the big developers. You caved in to them. You have all kinds of rationalizations why you did that, but people need to feel that at least they were heard, that they were part of a process, that they weren't shoved aside as these crazy special interests who for some reason are trying to just stop development and stop having reasonably priced housing for people. On the contrary, they support all kinds of affordable housing, which is another issue that this government is getting rid of.

I have many documents here from environmental and citizens' groups that came before us, and some who didn't just sent in the—

Mr Hastings: Where's your lunch receipt? Surely you are saving money from the UDI cut.

Ms Churley: I always know when I'm being effective when the member for Etobicoke—

Mr Gerretsen: Bedrock, isn't it? He's not in his seat. He shouldn't be recognized at all.

Ms Churley: He's not even in his seat, right. When he wakes up and starts heckling me, I know I must be getting to him.

Mr Gerretsen: He's moving closer.

Ms Churley: Look at that. He's up; he's laughing; he's having a good time. He's not asleep over there.

I have a document here from a group called Stop Environmental Deregulation in Canada. I went to a press conference they held at the University of Toronto this morning. This is a new group, I think the first kind in Canada. They're students from all over Ontario who are getting together and they're demanding that the Liberal government in Ottawa and the Harris government here in Ontario make a commitment to end the environmental law rollbacks. They're very worried about what's happening to the environment within this and they're much more worried about what's happening here in Ontario, but there are some real concerns which are happening in Ottawa too. I'm not going to get into that right away, though. Let me read this to you.

I'm counting for a quorum over there. I think we've got it.

This is very typical of comments made by so many people who were left out of this process. It says: "Public participation is critical to making sound, environmentally significant decisions. Members of the public who receive"—no, that's the intervenor funding one. Sorry about that. Intervenor funding is a whole other issue here that's going to help take their voices away.

Here it is. "Public ignored. It is frightful that in a country such as ours, which prides itself in a democratic decision-making process in which all citizens have the right to present their views on matters which concern them, the voices of so many members of the public are being ignored. The Harris government's hasty and insufficient consultation process on the omnibus bill is an excellent case in point.

"In preparing Bill 20, the Harris government again has failed to adequately consult the citizens of Ontario. In fact, the only parties consulted were the development industry"—

Mr Hastings: Wrong.

Ms Churley: I know they're right—"and member municipalities of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. How can the Harris government claim that it is restoring the balance between competing interests when all parties are not at the table? Is this the Harris government's idea of a balanced approach?"

I say shame. There is nothing this government can say that's going to change the fact. I know they'll make all kinds of noises, "Oh, we had this group in and that group in and we invited CELA and CIELAP to participate in the development of the policy statements, and they refused."

Mr Hastings: They have refused.

Ms Churley: Yes, they refused. I can tell you why they refused. I can tell you very well why they refused. There wasn't any point any more. They weren't consulted on the main bill, and then they were brought in as a sop at the end to say, "Oh, well, the policy statement, now come and help us write those." When municipalities and developers don't even have to pay attention to them any more, what's the point, for heaven's sake? Give me a break. This is ridiculous.

This guy over here wasn't even at the hearings. He hasn't read the bill. He doesn't know what's going on, which is typical of this government.

I wish the Minister of Environment and Energy was here today, because where has the Minister of Environment and Energy been in the process of the development of Bill 20? Nowhere. There's no evidence that minister had anything to do with the writing of this bill, period.

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I tried time and time again, during the course of committee hearings, to get the Minister of Environment and Energy to come in and answer specific questions about my concerns about the environmental aspects, the environmental deregulation that's going on within this bill.

Mr Gerretsen: We were stonewalled by the government members.

Ms Churley: We were completely stonewalled, as my friend from Kingston and The Islands says, completely stonewalled, because when the committee first started, we asked a question to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. He was clueless. I'm quoting him; I don't think I need to apologize for that. He didn't have a clue about the environmental side of this bill, which really worried me, because it's such a major component of the bill, and he couldn't answer the questions. He just kept saying, "Oh, don't worry," and the member for Bruce kept saying, "We haven't done a thing to environmental protection in this bill." It was like she was reading another bill.

Anyway, the Minister of Environment and Energy, I don't know, maybe she would've come if we'd been allowed to ask, but the government stonewalled and said no. What were they afraid of? If they really meant what they said, that there was adequate environmental protection in this bill, why would they not have had, proudly, the Minister of Environment and Energy come in and explain where we were going wrong, that somehow we were misinterpreting what was—but she didn't. She didn't volunteer her time either. I think it was of particular importance that the Minister of Environment and Energy give her views on the bill and assure us of her commitment to at least attempt to do her job.

Another aspect of this bill is of great concern and that's the concentration of power to the Minister of Municipal Affairs to determine whether matters are referred to the OMB or not. This is new. I know the Liberals and the member for Kingston and The Islands spoke to it yesterday, and I believe the parliamentary assistant—I'm sorry if it wasn't—somebody from that side expressed concern that he seemed to suggest that he was going to support that and now he wasn't.

Let me tell you why that's unsupportable. Nobody disagrees with the concept of streamlining the process, absolutely nobody, as long as, within the context of that streamlining, proper controls are in place and a process is worked out so that the public has confidence that if the Minister of Environment and Energy or the Minister of Natural Resources or the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs has some problems with the development they have a say in whether or not that goes to the OMB, that their concerns are represented, that the public has the confidence to know, because I know the Ministry

of Municipal Affairs and Housing, well, hey, they've got their role to play, and unfortunately, our government tried to start—not tried to, started the process of finally trying, and the Environmental Bill of Rights was part of that which the Minister of Finance is now exempt from, to make all ministries of the crown and ministers of the crown take the environment into account when considering anything. That just had to be part of the process. We tried to make all of our ministers and ministries accountable when it came to environmental protection.

There's a big reason for this, because over the years ministries have acted quite in isolation, in many cases, especially when it came to environmental concerns, and this had started to change. Now this government here has just put it back years in terms of shifting the climate and shifting the culture to think about environmental concerns, what's coming out at the end of the pipe, what this development is going to do when it's put on this particular piece of land.

The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has a lot of pressure. Just listen to the title of his ministry. It's all about development in many ways. So it's very concerning that this minister now has that sole power to determine these things, and particularly—I come back to the Minister of Environment and Energy—a minister who so far has demonstrated that she is not protecting the environment. On the contrary, it's very alarming that everything she has done to date—everything—has actually been to undermine environmental protection which already exists. And there are rumours that there's more to come.

What is going on, you have to ask. Is she really going along with this kind of deregulation and cutting? Does she understand the implications of her actions? Because if she does, she should resign. I would hang my head in shame if I were the Minister of Environment. I couldn't go out in public and face people if I were doing what she were doing. I'd have to resign. At a certain point, you've got to make a judgement here, and if she's being forced by the Premier and the Premier's office and other ministers to go along with this absolute devastation of environmental protection and the deregulation and cutting that's going on, then the environmental community and all citizens have something to be very concerned about.

Yesterday, as you know, there was a little bit of guerrilla theatre on the front lawn by a group of people—

Mr Gerretsen: Tory members?

Ms Churley: No, there were no Tory members there.

Mr Gerretsen: Well, you mentioned gorillas, so I thought—

Ms Churley: I don't think I'd even call them gorillas. The Speaker might remove me from the House, so I should be careful. I didn't call anybody anything. It's okay. I'm being very polite here.

They held this mock funeral, and it was a bit of theatre, but there was something very sad about the occasion in reality as well, because these are the people—housing activists—who are out there working on the front lines with poor people, with people who have lost their jobs during this terrible economic downturn, with people who have worked for years trying to better their environment.

For the first time in 20 or 30 years, they're actually seeing a trend that hasn't happened over those years, and

that is, the environmental protection and regulation actually going backwards. That's why this group I mentioned earlier, the group of students, has come together, because what environmentalists have been doing for the last 20 or 30 years is working slowly but surely. It's never enough, there's always more to do, but every government on every level, including the past Tory government here which brought in the Niagara Escarpment Commission—which I understand is somewhat threatened by this government now, but I just refuse to believe they'd go that far. What's amazing and what's really sad about this is that for the first time in 20 or 30 years, we're going backwards. We're not slowly making more—

Interjection.

Mr Gerretsen: "Why not?" He asked, why not go backwards?

Ms Churley: Did the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale actually say: "Why not? It's okay to go backwards"? He did, I believe.

Interjections.

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Ms Churley: I believe that this attitude sums up this government. The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale thinks it okay to go backwards. Now we're going to have that in Hansard. It's what was said, and of course that is what's happening. But we're all going to pay the price.

I just have a few minutes left and I want to refer back to a letter to the committee from Mr Sewell. I know that lots of people don't agree with Mr Sewell, but I think you have to respect him, and I think you have to give him credit for the fact that he went out and talked, literally for two years, to people, and he knows the planning system, the old planning system and of course the 163 that's been thrown out pretty much inside out. He knows some of the pitfalls that were there before, he knows what needs to be changed, and he knows that a balanced approach was needed.

It's true that although there was a broad consensus reached on Bill 163, not everybody agreed, certainly AMO—boy, you should've been in the room, Mr Speaker, when AMO came into the room to give their presentation. Boy, you could've taken out the cigars and the brandy, it was just instant old boys' club.

Mr Gerretsen: Oh, come now.

Ms Churley: Of course, the member for Kingston and The Islands is getting offended because—uh-huh, I'm surrounded by—

Interjection.

Ms Churley: Yes, boys, just a couple—one woman. But the atmosphere just completely changed and it was almost, yes sir, yes sir. They like this bill. They like everything that's in the bill.

Mr Gerretsen: There are a couple of parts they don't like.

Ms Churley: Well, a couple of parts, yes, but they really like this bill. They pretty well got everything they wanted. You had to be there, I realize that. It's hard to describe. Were you there, member for Hamilton Centre? You were, I think—

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): Sure, I was there.

Ms Churley: Oh, I put him on the spot. A few minutes ago he was heckling and saying, "Yes, you should have been there."

But seriously here, to wrap up, one of the issues that Mr Sewell talks about is the cost of poor planning, and that's a concern of all of us in this House. I know that members of government don't want to see poor planning. I have to believe that. I have to believe that those who are aware of what is in this bill, and I realize it's very few, but those who do, I would like to think would like to be assured by their minister that this won't lead to poor planning and a bogged down system.

What Mr Sewell says is: "There are two costs of poor planning. One cost is paid in the first instance by applicants who spend a great deal of time and energy trying to make their way through a flawed process. Those costs are passed on to those who buy into the development."

"A second cost is paid by future generations, those who come after us. They pay in terms of cleaning up polluted rivers, in terms of the social effects of badly planned physical form (many public housing projects, for example), in terms of added costs of public services."

"Good planning reduces costs in the short and long run. It is done through plans—official plans—which are comprehensive, based on sensible policies and are well-thought-out. Current legislation addresses these three aspects of good planning. The proposed amendments I have commented on in this letter would remove the requirement to meet these three tests."

Then Mr Sewell goes on to make amendments based on his knowledge of what had changed in the bill, which he believes is going to be the cost of poor planning. I believe Mr Sewell knows what he's talking about, and I believe this government is making a very big mistake, a very, very big mistake, to dismiss the expertise, the very valuable expertise that Mr Sewell has built up over the years through his own municipal work and through his many conversations with people from all walks of life, from all over Ontario.

I believe it was a huge mistake for this government within the time frame of a few short months to go ahead and rip the guts out of Bill 163, which had been developed over the course of four years, in consultation with all sides, including the developers, the municipalities, the environmentalists, the cottagers, and the citizens' groups who want to be part of the process and have a great deal of credibility in that process and a great deal at stake.

The government made a very big mistake by not including these people and it is going to come back to haunt them. We are going to see protracted case-by-case, site-by-site, long-drawn-out battles. We are going to see huge environmental costs and we are going to see a backlash from those in the public who are completely left out of this process, because this is a terrible, terrible bill and it isn't even going to achieve the main purpose for which the government brought it in. It is actually even going to bog down the process even more and we'll have to do it all over again four years from now.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Questions or comments?

Mr Gerretsen: I would certainly like to congratulate the member for Riverdale, as well as the member for

Cochrane South who spoke yesterday on this bill. There are just a couple of points that I would like to pick up on and that is the whole question of economic costs versus environmental costs. I think she's put the situation quite correctly, that the economic costs are something most of us think of that can be measured almost immediately and right away. There's an immediate impact.

But I think the environmental costs, when you look at the tremendous cleanups that are necessary, for example, with respect to the abandoned mining situations and with respect to the old dumps that are all over Ontario, in the long run may actually outdo the economic costs to a much greater extent.

The one other point that I would like to very briefly comment on deals with the issue of the tax cut. If it's one fallacy that I know I've tried to sort of bring my mind around over the last three or four months that seems to be perpetuated on an ongoing basis, it is this notion that if we give a tax cut of potentially \$5 billion to people, somehow we are not borrowing the money to do that, especially when you take into account that the government's own economic statement of November 27 clearly indicates that the debt situation of approximately \$100 billion today will rise to \$120 billion by the turn of the century. Your own documents indicate that the situation in Ontario is going to deteriorate by a further \$20 billion which just happens to equate with the amount of tax cuts that you want to give to the people of Ontario. It's not right. Do the right thing, forget about the tax cut, let's get our books in order and maybe then we can start taking a look at a tax cut.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I wanted to rise to congratulate my colleague from Riverdale on her presentation with regard to Bill 20. This is a very important piece of legislation and I thought it was very significant, the two aspects in particular that she raised: first, the lack of involvement by the Minister of Environment and Energy and her staff apparently in the preparation of the legislation; and the failure of the government to consult widely on such an important change that has such important ramifications for development in the province and for the protection of the environment.

As a former Minister of Environment and Energy and Minister of Natural Resources, I know this can be a touchy matter, the protection of farm land in the province, and wetlands and areas of important environmental significance, but it is very important.

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I'll just speak very briefly in response to my colleague's remarks about wetlands. I know this can be controversial, but we have to recognize that in southern Ontario, depending on whose figures you use, only about 13% to 20% of the original wetlands are left. The reason for that is that there has been agricultural drainage, but there has also been a lot of infilling that has led to urban sprawl and urban development.

Migrating wildfowl must have places to stop over if they're going to continue to make their migrations. Even if those lands are now in private hands, as many of them are, we must recognize that if we are to protect the environment and the ecosystem, those landing and nesting areas must be protected. Without having to take into

account clearly the wetlands policy, development may threaten the only 13% of wetlands in southern Ontario that are left.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): Just a few comments on the remarks of the member for Riverdale and even more particularly on the remarks that were just made by the former Minister of Environment.

I can tell you that when we were on that side and you were on this side, we had a great deal of difficulty particularly with one of the decisions that you made, specifically on the area of the Flying Toad Co-op on Toronto Islands. Remember that? That was built on wetlands. In fact, you were going to build a dike around this co-op. We, fortunately, have canned that, because it was one of the stupidest moves that you people ever made. But when you people sit there and have the gall to say that we don't care about the environment, it's a lot of gall, because that example was one of all things, quite frankly—When people try to protect parks, and that's what that whole area is over there as far as I'm concerned. That's for the people of Ontario, the people from Toronto, the people from Metro. But no. You were going to build a co-op on wetlands, and that's what that whole development was. The former Minister of Environment had a lot to do with that, the former Minister of Housing had a lot to do with that, but that was your decision.

I must say I get rather annoyed when you people go over there and you start talking about how you are the great protector of the environment—

Mr Gerretsen: No, you are the protector of the environment.

Mr Tilson: —because you're not the great protector of the environment, and that's why we're changing some of these decisions.

The member says that we are. We believe the decisions that we are making—it's as if you're saying we want to pave over Ontario. Give us a break. We don't want to do that. We have as many concerns as you do about the environment. But I'm telling you, don't sit over there saying how you were the great protector of the environment when that terrible example that you set up down on the Toronto Islands, which fortunately we have stopped, was the most unbelievable example of terrible plans for the environment.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I too want to compliment the member for Riverdale on her comments within the context of her concern with the environment. I want to say that not only does it involve the Planning Act when we're concerned about the environment, but it goes beyond that.

I hope that this government in its wisdom looks at things like the Gasoline Handling Act, because I can tell you that in Essex South we have a number of examples now where gas station owners are running into a problem where sufficient safeguards were not put in place in the past and property can't be exchanged because of the damage that's been done to the environment to this point.

We should be looking at these kinds of concerns when it does involve the environment, because as the member for Riverdale said, the costs that are being incurred unknowingly now are going to be considerable in the future. What we should do, I think, in many cases, is at

least err on the side of being conservative, if I may use that, being careful, so that, as was mentioned by the member for Riverdale, we don't abuse the environment and then have to pay for it to a significant degree in the future.

I encourage the government, please, that one of the things you look at then will be the Gasoline Handling Act and what the lack of controls in it at the present time are doing to the environment, and I think something should be put in place soon so that these costs can be met in the future.

Ms Churley: Too bad the member for Dufferin-Peel is not here, because I wanted to respond to him in particular. I want to thank the members for Kingston and The Islands, Algoma and Essex South. I want to come back to the comments by the member for Dufferin-Peel because I noticed he was very indignant and very upset.

Mr Hastings: He had a right to be.

Ms Churley: There goes the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale again.

I want to remind that member in particular, and all the members of his government who took great joy in that little indignant response to me—they thought they scored one there—they didn't, he didn't, because even their own Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing was quoted as saying to a meeting that Bill 163, our Planning Act, went too far towards protecting the environment. Your view is that we went too far towards protecting the environment, but the reality is that even your own minister feels that we're protecting the environment more than you guys and he wants to take away some of that protection because he thinks it went too far. That was a ridiculous argument, really ridiculous. We know that you just hate the Toronto Islands community, period, and would like to wipe it out. That's what that was all about and it was a good excuse to do that.

This government had an unprecedented happening when Eva Ligeti, the Environmental Commissioner of Ontario, wrote a letter to the Speaker of this House chastising them for what they did to the environment, the Environmental Bill of Rights under the omnibus bill. That's just quite incredible. This government doesn't care about the environment. It's very clear throughout all their policies and it's time they realized it and at least spoke the truth.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex): It's certainly a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak on the bill today. Unfortunately, the comments and advice that I'm about to provide to the House probably will disappoint the member for St Catharines. None the less, he's asked on a number of occasions, as well as the member for Cochrane South, for some of my political and I guess planning expertise.

I have to say I enjoyed the three weeks of public hearings immensely, and certainly the dialogue between opposition members and the comments that were made by the public. I think it's important, because the member for St Catharines has suggested that some of the expertise of backbenchers hasn't been used to the extent that it perhaps should be.

From that perspective, I can tell the House I thank the Minister of Municipal Affairs for his continuous requests

for caucus input into this bill, really from the outset of second reading right through to the preparation and development of the draft provincial policy statements.

In the time that I have, I also want to speak briefly about three key areas. Some of the members have previously spoken to this to some extent. Those are the one-window approach, the whole issue of local autonomy and how local autonomy applies to apartments as a right, and lastly the provincial policy statements. Albeit not a part of Bill 20, there was obviously a great deal of input from the public on the draft policy statements.

The first item, with respect to the one-window approach, I have to admit that I perhaps approach this from the somewhat biased position of a person who takes a keen interest in public administration and someone who doesn't necessarily accept the premise that we're compelled to protect government operations from organizational change, and really this is an issue of organizational change and certainly supports the minister's identification of one lead agency as it applies to planning matters.

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I have to admit as well that I'm somewhat mystified by the assumption that the one-window approach should be perceived as a barrier. From my viewpoint it shouldn't be perceived as a deterrent, because I fully suspect and believe honestly that matters of provincial interest expressed by other ministries will continue to be heard by the Minister of Municipal Affairs on a variety of issues.

I think throughout the hearing process—and I don't want to accuse the opposition members needlessly—there was the accusation, and we heard it again today, about AMO's involvement and their suggestions that the government simply took whatever AMO provided to us, placed it in this bill and proceeded with it. I thought it was of interest that there was an individual from Grey county here yesterday, and unfortunately she's not here again today, but she was there representing herself, not as a member of a particular group or organization, not as a member of AMO, for that matter, and I think her comments to the committee were very relevant and should be shared with the House. They specifically dealt with the one-window approach. I'm going to paraphrase a little bit of what she said.

She said: "I'm somebody who's been promoting a one-window approach. In my area it's a long-distance call to my neighbour." She elaborates here a little bit: "I have to go to 50 million different agencies to get an opinion. If we can ensure that there's going to be cooperation, I think the one-window approach is appropriate. I've been fighting for that kind of one-window approach now for over six years and I fully support it."

I think the important point here is that this individual has been looking at this idea for over six years, and that's critically important and one reason certainly why I think, and the public understands, why a one-window approach in one lead agency is very important to planning matters.

The second area that I briefly want to touch on, because I know I have other colleagues who wish to speak to the bill as well, is really the issue of local autonomy. I think it's very evident from the government's involvement in this bill and the direction that

we're taking that we're fundamentally opposed to a centralized planning system for Ontario, and for that very reason we believe that local municipalities do have the ability to make effective decisions with respect to land use planning matters, and that includes decisions on apartments as of right.

I would have to agree with the member for Riverdale that the discussions with respect to apartments as of right were very divisive. Tenants' associations obviously do not agree with the government. On the other side of the coin, municipalities want that flexibility. From the government's perspective, we're supportive of providing the municipality with that flexibility.

If I might come back to the local planning issue, we heard from time to time a great deal about existing or emerging community-based planning mechanisms that are currently utilized by many municipalities, and really when we hear about this it's an issue of pre-consultation, pre-consultation at the front end of the planning system, something that's currently going on presently. The reality is that this bill doesn't compromise or even prevent municipalities from continuing with these efforts—I think this is extremely important—nor does it deter the continued valued input of many community groups that participate in the planning process in a variety of interest areas.

This brings me to another important point, a point which was raised both by the member for St Catharines and the member for Kingston and The Islands, and that's the issue of time frames and the ability of both the municipality and the public to respond to planning applications. I would say the time frames that have been provided in this bill are aggressive but reasonable. The member for Kingston and The Islands also made two points yesterday with respect to time frames, and in fairness to the member, I think he described it at one point as planning time frames as being optics, but more importantly, when he was reflecting on his municipal experience, he suggested it was difficult to get the public interested in certain planning matters, and that's certainly an observation that I agree with.

I think in large part this is the problem that we're facing. We must ensure—and we also are assuming that there is a public interest in the planning system—that whatever system government develops, it's understandable and accessible to the public.

In part that brings me to my last point this afternoon. Certainly, there were some comments earlier about the lack of consultation, and I'm pleased that the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs is here, because, in fairness to some of the criticisms expressed by the member for Riverdale, the minister himself last fall, and albeit directly related to his ministry and portfolio, had been out meeting with groups across the province in several cities addressing a variety of issues. Some of those issues even include governance, planning issues and preferred planning models.

Just because the Minister of Municipal Affairs is not addressing the groups that the member for Riverdale would like to see, she should not indicate to the House that other ministries aren't performing consultation that is consistent with the development of this particular bill.

I think that's very important to realize, that this consultation is occurring and ongoing.

The last area I want to speak about is with respect to the provincial policy statement. Although it's not a part of the bill, I think it's important to address because it does have a particular application, a relevant application, to the "have regard to" and "shall be consistent with" test, and certainly that was a part of this bill.

We heard from a variety of organizations on this issue. I think one of the statements made by the Canadian Bar Association has a particular application. Admittedly, there's a variety of perspectives on this issue. The CBA stated, "We believe that the amendment, the reinstatement of the 'have regard to' test, should significantly reduce the costs and delays that would have been created in the planning process if one retained the 'shall be consistent with' test."

As I mentioned earlier, there are obviously many different comments and statements made on the particular draft policy statements, and admittedly they varied. But I do want to make one point which I think is important. It's important to realize that draft statements have been out since January for consultation. The parliamentary assistant suggested yesterday and alluded to the fact that we received over 200 submissions with respect to opportunities to improve that provincial policy statement. Most importantly, the statements that will accompany this bill represent a minimum standard only. I think that's important, because nothing prevents municipalities across this province from exceeding that minimum standard, and many of them already do. I think that's very important to realize.

As I reflect on this particular issue, I can only think of the planning process that's used by the city of London, and yes, I recognize it's a major urban centre. But the city of London is currently in the process of deliberating whether to keep certain environmental planning groups or not. This is a municipality which has a very active environmental component in its planning system, a component that's involved at the front end of the system and not after the fact. So I think that minimum standard will be exceeded, because it's in the public interest and the interests of the development community to respond to environmental interests across the province.

One of the other perhaps obvious concerns expressed by the public, and perhaps why the policy statements that were devised under Bill 163 have failed from a public scrutiny perspective in some regard, is the associated guideline documents. We heard one delegation describe those documents as a good doorstopper. John Sewell himself, when reflecting on the implementation guidelines, described them as "crazy" and "not useful" documents.

If we're truly interested in identifying provincial interests and policy directions which are understandable to the public, we cannot afford to have these items described as doorstoppers or as not useful or crazy, because when we do, we have failed. But most importantly, we discourage public interest in the planning process. This is why this government has committed itself to making changes to the planning system that make it simpler and easier to work within.

Certainly, from that perspective, I highly support the minister's review of the provincial policy statements and trust that the final product, which has been based on nearly two months of consultation, will clearly articulate what the provincial interests are and rid itself of a very highly process-oriented framework which is currently in place under Bill 163.

I would have to say in conclusion that in the short time I've had I've really only had the opportunity to address a few of perhaps many issues, including many technical issues that the committee heard, but I think there are some very positive issues here, one being some positive changes to the administration of our own government operations with the identification of the one-window approach, a streamlined planning system that clarifies provincial rules, and equally important, places more responsibility at the local level, and changes which I believe in the longer term will improve the government's internal operations and locally develop a planning system which I believe will place a greater priority on community-based planning decisions.

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The member for Riverdale, in conclusion, suggested that in her conversations with the representative from the Urban Development Institute, the institute was looking for certainty. I think certainty is exactly what we hope to achieve and want to achieve with this particular bill in terms of the long-term health of our communities and economic opportunities for those communities in the future.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Gerretsen: I'd just like to make some brief comments with respect to the views from the member for Middlesex. It's unfortunate that during the committee hearings he didn't share some of his expertise with us, because I realize that he does know something about the planning process.

It's also unfortunate that the consultation process that took place with respect to the procedural act is not taking place with respect to the provincial policy statements. I think they should have been vetted in exactly the same way as the act has been by a standing committee of this House, because it's the policy statements that ultimately determine what happens with respect to planning in the province of Ontario.

One other comment, very quickly, deals with this whole notion of a one-window approach. Everyone is in favour, as far as I can determine, with respect to a one-window approach. The problem is that whereas right now we know exactly where a ministry stands with respect to any appeals it may launch to the OMB, and we know exactly which ministry is in favour of or against a particular development and the reasons for that, under the system that's proposed, unless you have the protocols in place as to how it will work, how the views of different ministries will be taken into account by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, the planning system will not be, as you have stated, understandable and accessible to the public.

We will develop a system where in effect the views of some ministries may very well be finessed. We may never hear the reason as to the internal kind of debate

that will take place as to why a particular development should or should not be opposed or appealed to the OMB. Until those protocols are in place, I will tell you that the general public will not really understand what's happening internally within the ministries. That's really unfortunate, and that's where this whole notion of a one-window approach may fall down.

The planning system has to be understandable and accessible to the public, and that includes the knowledge about the methodology that's being used in order for the Ministry of Municipal Affairs to come up with a particular position in the matter.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I'm delighted to have an opportunity to comment on the comments of my friend and neighbour from the county of Middlesex. I would say that he does have some expertise in this and that I'm very interested that he uses the city of London as an example, because my friend knows very well that when the city of London annexed a very large portion of Middlesex county, it was done by special legislation, and under that special legislation there were requirements made around the building of an official plan for January 1996. Among those requirements were that the city do the process that he has described in such glowing terms: making a social plan and making an environmental plan as well as an economic plan as part of that official plan process.

He's right. That's the way it should be done, and that was the vision of the Sewell commission and one of the reasons that was written into that particular special legislation. But what he regrettably did not say was that by January 1996, the legislated deadline, we were already seeing in London and Middlesex great pressure from developers to weaken the environmental provisions that were there in that special legislation, threats that they would take the official plan to the OMB if those original requirements were followed, and a great deal of pressure around that. Of course, the city of London, as had been its practice prior to the special legislation, appears to be yielding to the pressure of those developers and appears to be waiting for this government to pass this more permissive legislation in order to escape the provisions that they had in that special legislation.

The people who lose most are the people in the annexed portion of the county of Middlesex whom this member represents, and he knows very well that his remarks will be controversial with his constituents.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): I rise today to show a little respect for our member for Middlesex, who indeed displayed a great deal of professional insight and participated in the Bill 20 public hearings, in which I participated a couple of times and was able to learn from that. As a previously elected local politician, I can only speak to the issue as I remember hearing Bill 163 and the Sewell commission unfold in Ontario. It was an attempt to centralize planning, and in my view it was state-run control, as in many of the other issues and policies the party at that time was trying to do in all things in legislation.

Bill 20 goes a long way towards recognizing that indeed responsible local decision-making is what the people of Ontario want. They want community-based

decision-making, and certainly in planning they will make responsible decisions consistent and in conformity with the needs of the community. I know for sure, coming from Durham East, that a lot of people work very hard voluntarily in a supportive role of putting environment first. I know as their representative that certainly environment will be espoused and recognized, and I know that the municipally elected people will also ensure that the environment is not neglected in the planning process.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Yorkview.

Interjection: Rexdale still has 27 seconds.

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I didn't know that was my time, Mr Speaker.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): Mario, you've got two minutes.

Mr Sergio: Oh, I've got two minutes? Okay. Since I have an extra couple of minutes, I wish to add to the comments made by the previous member, so this won't take away from my speaking time. This is a very important piece of legislation to which I'd like to add my comments. I have to say that I enjoyed the comments expressed by the member for Riverdale on the environmental issues. I share most of those concerns. I also appreciate the concern expressed by Mr Smith, the member for Middlesex. He has shown that he has knowledge of planning matters, and he even recognized some of the difficulties this legislation, as presented, presents to the Legislature. I would hope, in the days to come, if we have days—perhaps hours—to deal with this particular legislation, we may have some changes so they can be aired and some of his own concerns can be addressed as well.

In answer to the member for Durham East, yes indeed, we all like to see the possibility of having the planning process streamlined and made easier. Unfortunately, this is one of the concerns, that it's incorporated within this bill, and it looks like it may be approved without taking those into consideration. I hope to say more about that during my speaking time.

Ms Churley: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I would like to ask for unanimous consent to allow the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale to have two minutes. He really wanted to speak and we'd like to hear from him.

The Deputy Speaker: Is that agreed? It's agreed.

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Mr Hastings: There are only two major points I wanted to make with regard to some of the comments made about this government's environmental record. One was—I find it very curious—that the honourable member for Riverdale said this government does not care about the environment. I think the proof of the bill shows a more balanced sensitivity and flexibility in this piece of legislation than in the Sewell-like model we had before. It brings it back into focus.

The other thing that a lot of my colleagues, even members of our own caucus, would have some question about is that none of these colleagues on this side has any concern about the environment in terms of direct action. If you surveyed every member of this Conservative caucus, every member of the NDP caucus, every member of the Liberal caucus, I'm sure at one point or another in

their careers before coming to this House or even while they're here, they have been involved in environmental partnerships. They have probably helped in tree planting, they have probably been involved in community-based groups. So I take great umbrage with the member for Riverdale saying that members on this side particularly have no interest in preserving the environment.

From her own government's record, I can recall not only the debacle on Toronto Islands but one in terms of Humber College and trying to preserve the old Lakeshore Psychiatric Hospital. Her government was going to end up bringing about a complete disaster and collapse of environmental integrity in terms of the sensitive features along the west bank of the Humber River. I couldn't believe she would stand there and say we have no concern about the environment.

Mr Smith: I just have a couple of quick comments. I thought my colleague from Kingston and The Islands was supportive, all through the hearings, of the one-window approach, and I think he's reiterated that today, subject to having the established protocols in place. I think that's an important first step in terms of realigning ministry operations, and developing a system whereby people understand who will be the lead agency with respect to planning matters in the province.

I have to resist a little bit entering debate with my friend from London Centre, because she provided some comments in the context of environmental concerns. I always have a little difficulty grasping that, particularly as it applies to the annexation in London. I don't want to belabour this because this House has had this debate, but I find it difficult that she, as a member of the former government who agreed to the annexation of 26,000 hectares of land from the county of Middlesex—and I'm sure the member for St Catharines would be interested to know that nearly 90% of that land is prime agricultural land. Yes, there was demand for development in the area, but I have some difficulty justifying those environmental concerns in terms of the long-term impact on agriculture and the rural community that's as important as the city of London surrounding in the county of Middlesex.

Those are very important considerations that the member forgets about.

Mr Wildman: Weren't you working for the city of London during the annexation?

Mr Smith: Yes, I do represent a portion of the city of London and the county of Middlesex, and that's where this particular solution fell apart.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Sergio: As I was saying, I'd like to add my comments on this particular legislation, as it is of great importance. Let me pick up on where the member for Riverdale left off with respect to the environment. I won't dwell on that because I think she spent a considerable time, as did my colleague the member for Kingston and The Islands yesterday, and spoken quite eloquently on the matter.

But let me say that a couple of years ago, or perhaps more than that, when the Sewell report was being conducted with Mr Penfold, at that time, I was a member of North York city council. We did say at the time that his views were not acceptable to the local municipality, and

I'm speaking at the present time on behalf of the municipality of which I've been a member for a number of years.

Of course, he was trying to force upon the local municipalities his own views as to what recommendation at the end would he be making to his own government he was appointed from. It's sad to say that at the end, at the conclusion of that particular report, even Mr Sewell was criticizing to some extent his own completed report.

But having said that, we now have amendments, we have new proposed legislation here which unfortunately does nothing more than add some more window dressing. Having said that, I think with the passage of this legislation, the only thing the government of the day will have on their record is that they have made some changes, some amendments to the legislation, and nothing more.

If we are speaking on behalf of giving more powers, more flexibility, more autonomy to the various local municipalities, it's one matter. If we are speaking in terms of streamlining the process, making it easier to be understood, cutting perhaps the time for approval and support, I'm afraid they are not going to do it with this particular piece of legislation.

Inasmuch as I think it's in the interests of everyone, especially of the local municipality, to see that applications are dealt with in a very efficient manner, the way the legislation is being proposed, this will not be accomplished. If there is one thing that this legislation will do—and I'm speaking from some experience, having been a number of years on municipal council—it will produce nothing but more bad development, and this is the last thing the local municipalities want. Perhaps it will add some benefits to small municipalities in rural Ontario, but it will not—absolutely will not—improve the situation, the planning process, especially within big cities such as Metropolitan Toronto.

While we have seen the conclusion of the Sewell report, what we have here now is another one that does very little to improve the process. Both from a provincial point of view and from a local point of view, assisting local communities and local residents, it does absolutely nothing. As a matter of fact, it's taking away from the involvement of ratepayers and individuals. I'll tell you, with the exception of some lawyers on the other side of the House here, on the government side, who may have had experience in dealing in municipal politics or cases or applications, rezoning, whatever have you, they can tell you that this will not improve the situation at all, and I'll tell you why.

This is in the government's own document. This is what the minister said when he presented the bill with the amendments: "We will scrap parts of Bill 163 that don't work and bring in a planning system that's faster and less bureaucratic, that people can understand...a planning system that delivers an answer more quickly." So far, so good. The problem is with the rest.

He says: "The system will be guided by provincial policies which will be clear and concise and deal with issues that should be under the jurisdiction of the province. The policies will focus on the desired results rather than on the process by which those results are achieved."

That's the problem. No longer are we transferring autonomy, power, jurisdiction, flexibility to the local

municipality. We are saying to the local municipality: "You don't have to any more. It's only a guide, it's only a policy, and if you don't want to, you don't have to do it."

The requirement, which is one of the major amendments to the legislation as it is presented, that the planning decision "be consistent with" provincial policy statements is deleted and replaced with the former requirement that they "have regard to" provincial policies. How can we say on the one hand that this government criticizes and wants to change the former policies of the previous government, which means the Sewell report, and now they are saying, "We are going to delete that—our own—and replace it with the former one," when the former one didn't work?

Practically, we are saying to the local municipalities now, "You don't have to abide by the provincial policies, just 'have regard to'." Mr Speaker, if you are familiar with municipal politics, this does not work. It only works when a municipality understands the various intricacies of the planning process, wants to streamline its own workings and make sure that it has everything in place, such as documentation from the various applicants, and can cut the inside red tape.

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I can say that because I have experience with one particular local municipality where a rezoning application won't take any more than six months, not 13 months as it is said within the document that is presented by the Minister of Housing; not 13 months but six months. So it can be done.

I will not dwell on other parts of the bill and I will concentrate and make some remarks strictly with respect to the planning process as it affects the local municipality.

One major fault that I see with this particular bill here, that now it's required the local municipality to give 20 days' notice or not to have a hearing prior to 20 days and to notify those people present, if they want to be heard either verbally or in writing, that if they wish to appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board, they won't be able to unless, during that particular time, they have made a submission either in writing or orally.

On behalf of the public out there, I find this quite unacceptable. There are many occasions where an application may change following that particular presentation, or that a ratepayers' organization may be out of town or may not have received the notice about a public hearing and may want to appeal a particular condition of that agreement or what have you after the fact, and those people are disenfranchised. I think that is a fault of the legislation as it is being presented. Twenty days is not a heck of a lot to give notice. It doesn't even say in the legislation, as it is presented, that they have to be 20 working days. It says 20 days.

If a local ratepayers' organization wants to organize itself, make a good presentation, they may have to hire at certain times, depending on the nature of an application, either a lawyer or planner or consultant so they can prepare their case. So 20 days, it's not a heck of a lot. So this will be working not in favour of the local municipality, not in favour of a particular developer; it will be

working totally against the local people who may be affected by those changes. When we are talking zoning changes, rezoning applications, the Planning Act as a whole, if you will, there is nothing else that is more important either to the local municipality or the people within a particular community itself. That is the thing that most local councils hate, that is the thing that most residents and local organizations get involved with and I think we should be giving them the greatest opportunity that we can.

Let me touch briefly with respect to how the proposed legislation would affect Metropolitan Toronto. Let me say that unless the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the government deal with the situation here in Metro, the situation cannot work. I'll tell you why. There is nothing in this particular document here which addresses the planning process within Metropolitan Toronto. There is absolutely nothing.

There is an area where the Metro government has control of the planning process on major arterial roads within 100 feet. So I'm going to have to tell you, Mr Speaker, what this does to the planning process within Metropolitan Toronto. As I've said before, the legislation as it is presented may be more flexible, may facilitate the planning process out of the Metro area in the smaller municipalities in the north and others, but within Metro this will not work. For that, you may hear from some of the Metro members, who I'm sure will tell you the same thing, as a matter of fact. The member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, who used to be the president of UDI, has been very constantly sending out monthly newsletters attacking the present situation with the Planning Act; and knowing how he was writing those monthly letters, the changes in the proposed Bill 20 does not change much of those views.

Let me address for a moment one of the important and most critical aspect of the Planning Act as it affects local municipalities with respect to second units. This has been the big bone of contention with the local municipalities, and just to give you an idea, I'll read the answer from AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, which is well in unison with various municipalities. I don't have to tell you that the city of London had, I believe, taken the province to court, the former government, with respect to the laws on basement apartments.

This is what the views of AMO were: "Instead of a blanket legislation, municipalities have been calling for the authority and powers to deal with regulatory and enforcement problems related to accessory units, for example, the authority to license and register units, greater power of entry to inspect units, increased fines for offences and speedier court system and procedure to enforce work orders, improved ability to collect fines, and changes to the assessment of accessory units in a manner which better represents the additional cost of residential units."

This is an area that is causing problems to various local municipalities, I can tell you, and I would support the city of North York point of view with respect to that. I can say that unless the legislation has some teeth, many areas want absolutely nothing to do with second units. It's not my view, because I did support that. We've been

saying, including our mayor of the city of North York, that we've got to have some controls in order to have second units, if you will, or second-floor or basement apartment or whatever. Unless we have those controls, we will not have safe neighbourhoods, quiet, clean, efficient and comfortable units where the safety of those occupants can be more or less satisfied or guaranteed.

This has been a big problem, and it continues to be. And why is that now? Because the legislation, as it is, does not impose local municipalities to provide second units. It is totally at their liberty. "Yes," they may say, "We will allow basement units or second units," or whatever. But laws, conditions, rules may be so stringent that many communities won't be able to accede to those particular conditions, let alone the other aspects, because when you deal with an established community and now that particular community is being—this is part of increasing the density, if you will, to provide more affordable units, and yes, there is some consensus on that.

The fact is that when you deal with an increased density in single-family residential areas and you move into an established community, where that community has spent God knows how many years to buy a low semi-detached or a small two-bedroom bungalow and so forth, and now many of those neighbourhoods are being destroyed because of lack of authority from the local municipality, because there is no control, no control on parking, no control on regulation, absolutely nothing at all. I would hope that local municipalities will be able to say: "Yes, we will do that. We will have some controls, we will have registries, we will have a licence." They may impose some assessment, if you will, to maintain the extra burden the increased density may bring on local services, and that they will accept that.

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I won't continue too long because I know some other colleagues may want to address this matter. But this may be a case where the NIMBY situation can be more vocal in a lot of neighbourhoods where a community feels threatened by a local municipality that may push more higher densities in their own area.

I'm going to quit here because I know a couple of other members have indicated if they can have a few minutes. I hope this legislation can be improved. We know we have made a number of amendments, good amendments, that the government has refused to support and I'm afraid, given the number of concerns which we have expressed, both in the House and at the committee level, that it will be very difficult to support the legislation as it is being presented.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions?

Ms Churley: I appreciate the comments from Yorkview. I know that not every situation with this bill the Liberals and NDP feel the same about, but I just wanted to talk about basement apartments for a moment. I'm not quite sure if I understood the position the member for Yorkview is taking, and perhaps he could clarify it if he thinks it's appropriate in his summing up in two minutes.

I just wanted to tell you why the NDP government moved on the legalization of basement apartments. I'm sure many people here heard about some of the tragic fires where people died over the past several years in

illegal basement apartments, and what we found is that, unfortunately, people, through the need for the income and people needing to rent very low-rent accommodation, were living in illegal basement apartments under very unsafe conditions. What we found—I don't have the numbers in front of me—that there are thousands and thousands of those apartments out there. How many?

Mr Bernard Grandmaître (Ottawa East): It's 100,000.

Ms Churley: It's 100,000, and they were there. I'm not saying I'm condoning breaking the law, like the Premier once said that it's natural for people to try to evade taxes. I don't condone that, but the reality is, due to all kinds of strains and stresses out there, people needing money etc, people were in fact creating these illegal apartments and municipalities had no control. People living in very unsafe conditions were terrified to report it, because then they'd lose their accommodation completely. Then there were some municipalities who just wanted to keep poor people and people from other ethnic groups out. We knew all of that was happening, but we felt that it was important to address a really serious situation that we'll just revert back to now. That's what will happen.

Mr Michael Brown: I appreciated the views of the member for Yorkview who brought an urban perspective to this particular debate. I had the opportunity, and the dubious distinction perhaps, of chairing the committee hearings under the former government with regard to basement apartments or secondary units or whatever was the buzzword of the day.

One of the things I find is that in my part of the province, this is not an issue to speak of, but certainly the member for Yorkview brings the urban perspective to this. One of the things that I find a little bit difficult to quite comprehend was that the member for Mississauga South, for example, at those hearings under the previous government was very concerned about fire regulations. She was very concerned that these units were not going to be identified properly, in other words, we didn't know or a municipality didn't know where they were, and therefore they couldn't be inspected, and she was calling for fire inspections before they could be registered as units. She was quite adamant that there be proper building inspections, proper fire inspections. I remember very compelling testimony from the fire chief from Mississauga on this very issue.

The government knows we have a problem out there. There is a problem. There's an accommodation problem and there's a problem with people being able to have safe, affordable units that are appropriate to their neighbourhood. I appreciate my good friend the member for Yorkview bringing these issues to the fore, and I'm a little perplexed by why the government is failing to address these issues in a meaningful way.

Mr O'Toole: With respect to the member for Parkdale's comments, there were two things. The streamlining comments that were made, I suspect that if you really are clearly listening, some of the time lines and the prescribed days in our changes were indeed intended to streamline the process and focus the decision-making for the advantage of the applicant who may be a developer,

but also for the individual home owner who may be waiting for that small minor variation or whatever the change in the planning system is.

The same could be said for the language of "having regard to." I think planning is not an exact science. There are planners at OMB where I've heard both professional planners arguing the same point from a purely opposite point of view, so to suggest that planning is an exact science is misleading.

So in "have regard to" and sound planning principles, those professional people, trained, would make decisions that were consistent and in harmony with their community and indeed with the provincial policy guidelines. I think it's important to recognize that both of those things, to the member for Parkdale, do really focus on the streamlining process. That's what this government is about: removing the barriers to growth. I know the development community as well as the small developers in the small community I live in think this was a very progressive thing to do, and the public meeting process, we did make those small changes in the amendments, so in plans of subdivisions I believe we allowed the public process to continue as well.

Thank you for the opportunity to make the comments.

Mr Gerretsen: I would just very briefly like to address this whole notion of local autonomy. It's almost as if this is something new that was invented by this government. I've heard provincial governments of whatever stripe say for the last 25 years, whenever they want to get rid of something, "We want to give the local communities greater autonomy and we want to make them equal partners." Of course, there's no such thing as an equal partnership, let's face it, and there will never be an equal partnership unless we reach the stage whereby basically we elevate municipal government to the same level as that of a provincial and federal government. Only then will you have an equal partnership.

It always reminds me of the great debate that took place during the Peterson years. I was heavily involved with AMO at that time. We had a board of directors of something like 88 members, and AMO always said: "Give us more autonomy. We want more authority. We want it." Do you remember what the Peterson people did? They said, "Yes, here's the Sunday shopping issue." My whole board of directors at the time, except for two other members and me, 85 of them said: "Oh gosh, we don't want that one. That's a political hot potato."

It was the perfect kind of issue that should have been decided at the local level. Sunday shopping may be a good thing for Sault Ste Marie, for Niagara Falls, for downtown Toronto, but it may not be something that is good for Kingston or Ottawa or someplace else. That's where the real local autonomy should be.

Don't give me this nonsense that you're the first government that's going to do something for local autonomy. That's been around ever since, I suppose, the province created municipalities some 150 years ago. The proof is in the pudding, and I'll tell you, as long as you control the provincial policy statements, you will always have the final say about what kind of development takes place at the local level, and don't ever kid yourself that until you do something about the provincial—if you

really want to give them local autonomy, scrap all provincial policy statements.

1710

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker: Please take—

Mr Gerretsen: I'm prepared to go on for another half-hour.

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Yorkview.

Mr Sergio: Perhaps the member for Kingston and The Islands may have his wish after I have my couple of minutes. I just want to appease the concern of the member for Riverdale with respect to what I said before and with respect to the second unit.

I think the safety of the people occupying those units, that was our major concern, and indeed it may not be a problem in the small municipalities out of Metro, but it's a big problem within Metro and especially in certain areas within Metro. There are streets where practically every other house has either a second unit on the second floor or a basement apartment with no regard with respect to fire safety, smoke detectors, second kitchen, second bathroom, emergency exit and stuff like that. I don't have to tell you that there are a number of people who unfortunately did suffer tragic consequences because of those inadequacies and especially when it comes to the building code.

We did say we want some controls. We want to make sure that you have some plans, you can get a building permit. You pay your own fees, and they can be inspected on a regular basis. Those were our concerns. I think most people would support the building of second units to get some income, providing that there are some conditions attached. I continue to support that. We always said that, especially in times of lack of affordable housing, we have to do our share, and we did, but of course we like to have some controls. This continues to be our view. So I hope that this will appease the member for Riverdale.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Christopherson: I appreciate the opportunity to join in the debate on Bill 20, and I think that for anyone who takes the time to look at exactly what Bill 20 means to communities, and particularly how it fits in the overall agenda of this government, it becomes pretty clear that this is an integral part of the Mike Harris vision of what Ontario should become and I believe that's why we're seeing it so early in the mandate and I believe that's why we're seeing it rushed through relative to the amount of time that we took when we brought in Bill 163.

The components of this new vision, yes, include and perhaps are focused on job creation. I have no doubt that's the intent. I as one member, and particularly as the labour critic and someone from Hamilton, am very concerned about what kind of jobs. Let's look at the rest of the agenda that goes with these Planning Act amendments.

We've seen Bill 7. Bill 7 basically lays the groundwork for busting unions in Ontario. The strike that we now have with OPSEU across Ontario is in large part a symbol that this government is offering up to those who want—and I don't believe they all do, but for those

employers that do want to eliminate or certainly weaken the labour movement, this is the message that says to them: "Go for it. This is the green light. We're showing you how it's done. We've taken away the rights; we've weakened down the labour movement in Bill 7, and so a part of this vision is going after the labour movement. Here's how you do it. We're doing it. You, please, go ahead and do the same thing."

That's part of what this is about, that if you can weaken the labour movement as well as having the political side benefit of reducing the ability of one of the most effective counterpoints and counterideas to this government, they become much weaker, because the labour movement of course is leading the protests in London, the 100,000 people who peacefully demonstrated in my community of Hamilton and will go on to do so in Kitchener-Waterloo and other communities over the next few years. So a political benefit is: Weaken those organizations that are most able to muster appropriate response and quite frankly fight back to what this government is all about. So there's a political side benefit.

But back to the economics of it and Bill 20, the purpose of busting unions and watering them down and weakening unions is to allow wages to drop significantly in this province. That's part of this government's agenda, because they believe that in terms of the new global economy, the only competitiveness that matters is looking at developing nations and Third World nations and saying: "There's where we will compete. We will compete with Mexico, and we will compete with other developing nations in the Asia-Pacific corner of the world. We will look to the benefits and wages that people in Ontario now get, and we'll cut that so that we can go out and compete."

Of course, we know that while that may be a winner for some businesses, and if you look at some of the profits you'd have to believe that some of the things happening are definitely a benefit to some corporations, the working people of this province lose big time. What we ought to be doing, and it was our approach, is investing in the strengths that we have in this province. Part of that is environmental protection, which I'm going to comment on later, which is significantly weakened under Bill 20.

Rather than attacking those environmental protections, we ought to build on them, because that makes for a better quality of life. That's a strength where we can compete with anybody in the world. The United Nations twice now has said that Canada—and when you say Canada, in large part you're talking about the largest province in our Confederation—was chosen as the best place in the world to live, not because we had the weakest environmental laws, not because we had the lowest minimum wage, not because we had the weakest health and safety standards, not because we had the weakest planning laws and procedures, but quite frankly the opposite: because we have strong environmental protection, because we have, until you're finished with it, a strong, effective health care system and education system and infrastructure.

Infrastructure means roads, it means sewers, it means all the things that make us competitive. Then when you

add new technology, which we are a leading nation in, the application of new technology, particularly in applications in the manufacturing sector, now we can start to compete against the best in the world, and not only do the corporations do well, which they should—we need to have them strong, but not at the expense of the standard of living of the ordinary working person in this province.

So the corporations win, the average working person wins because they've got a strong union that fights to make sure they get their fair share of the profits that are being generated, and we go on to have our children trained and schooled in the best education system. We have a health system that's the envy of the world, until you're finished dismantling it, but we certainly have that to start with. Those are all wins for all of us. But, yes, it requires an investment in those areas.

While one needs to be dealing with the debt and deficit, there's absolutely no need to do it as quickly as this government is doing, not at the expense of all those things I've just mentioned that make this a great place to live, that give us that high quality of living, not to even mention the absolute absurdity and obscenity of seeing this government slash and cut our education system and health care system and infrastructure. All the things that are our strength you are slashing even deeper and quicker than needs to be so you can give your wealthy friends a 30% income tax cut. That's the way the average working person sees your agenda.

I look at the Tory backbenchers and I see them rolling their eyes and shaking their heads. That's fine. You just keep on ignoring the viewpoint of the majority of Ontarians, and we'll see what that does in the next election. If there are any by-elections along the way, that will certainly start to tell the tale too.

I'm suggesting that Bill 20 is an important part, for this government, of their belief that we have to dismantle all the things that make this a really great place to live, because that's their vision of how we compete. We reject that, and I believe the majority of Ontarians will reject that.

1720

Moving to the specifics of this bill, I want to talk first of all about the time frame used, again, in putting this forward. We've already seen very clearly what this government thinks of democracy. If any one of the Tory backbenchers wants to suggest that's just rhetoric, you keep in mind the omnibus Bill 26 and what happened. Let me tell you very clearly there are millions of Ontarians who understood what you were trying to do and why we did what we did in terms of literally seizing this Legislature to force you—force you—to allow at least some public consideration of what is clearly the biggest power grab bill in the history of Ontario.

As labour critic I can also point to Bill 7, because Bill 7 came even earlier than Bill 26, and there you didn't just amend the Ontario Labour Relations Act; you completely replaced it. You introduced it on October 4, it was law by October 31—Halloween, I might point out—which I think is quite apropos, because on that day the mask came off and we truly saw what this government thinks about democracy.

When they completely replaced the Ontario Labour Relations Act and did it in that land-speed record time of

27, 28 days, they did not allow one minute of public hearing, not one minute, and then they wonder why there are tens of thousands of workers on the picket line right now and they wonder why we continue to say to them that that clash out front on Monday with the police and the picketers was a part of Bill 7, and that further violence is all but guaranteed, given what you've done to working people and the position you've put them in, and just the absolute disgrace of allowing and making legal the use of scabs again in this province when we finally had put that practice behind us. You know that working people have a right to fight that kind of anti-democratic process.

I see that the Honourable Cam Jackson, who's the minister responsible for gutting the WCB, is present today. We talk about public process again, wide-open process, the Royal Commission on Workers' Compensation—the government grabbed that, went into their hole, no more public hearings. All these meetings he's been talking about by having planted questions from some of his backbenchers are merely meetings he had to go to because injured workers organized them. They're not his meetings. He wouldn't hold public meetings; he wouldn't hold public meetings on these WCB consultations; he didn't hold public meetings because he will face what I saw in his own home community of Burlington, where literally hundreds of injured workers ripped strips off his back because they saw the agenda of this government.

What do we have with Bill 20? Our Bill 163 took four years—four years public process, public consultation—and then at the end of the day we passed the law. Here we are, nine months into this government's mandate; that's the maximum they could have spent on this. They've only been in power that long. Who did they consult with to put this together? Who did they meet with? It certainly wasn't done in public. The law was dropped into this Legislature. They met with their friends; they met with their supporters; they met with the interest groups they want to satisfy. They never call their cronies interest groups, just those who are oppose to them.

They bring this in, having talked to virtually their friends and cronies in private, bring this forward, drop it down and then they wonder why we constantly raise the issue of this government being anti-democratic. The evidence is there, the proof is there and it mounts with every action this government takes. Every step shows clearly what this government is about and what it thinks of democracy in this province.

I next want to move to what I consider to be one of the most critical aspects of what this bill does to planning in the province of Ontario. It's an issue that I have a great deal of interest in because I spent five years on the city and regional councils of Hamilton and Hamilton-Wentworth and I spent all of that time on the city planning committee. So I have not just an interest but experience in this area and I'm really concerned about this issue of moving from a law that says you have to be "consistent with" the environmental protection policies of the government, as opposed to "have regard to."

Unfortunately, for most people this is when they understandably start to glaze over, because what does all this mean? They're debating words and technicalities, but

here are some very significant words and technicalities that'll have a long-range impact not just on our generation and our children and grandchildren, but beyond, because we're talking about land use.

When you talk about land use in the context of planning, in many cases you're talking about a one-shot decision. You get one shot at making the right decision that'll give you the balance between development and the environment, and if you call it wrong, you can in many cases destroy that environment, destroy that ecosystem and perhaps never, ever again get it back.

If anyone questions the validity of that kind of philosophical approach to land use and planning, take a look at the number of species that are disappearing every year from the planet. We all have responsibility for that. It's probably the one thing I can't lay at the feet of this government, at least not yet. But give me time.

But truly, that does point to the fact that as a human race occupying this planet, we're overall doing a lot of damage. That may sound rather large given the context of this issue, but that's how I feel about it because when it comes down to making the nitty-gritty decisions about when an ecosystem survives and when it doesn't, it comes down to the laws that surround and dictate the planning process and land use. You can't separate them.

"Consistent with" and "have regard to"—I would say to any Ontarian listening that you don't have to be a lawyer to understand that if you have to be consistent with a policy that is meant to protect the environment, that's a much stronger requirement on your part than "have regard to." "Have regard to" could be as little as—one description from someone who came to one of the committee hearings was driving down the highway and having regard to a speed sign, meaning just glance at it and then continue to speed over the limit. I believe it can be as little as that. We had some people come out and offer legal evidence that the OMB has said no, it's stronger than that, but I think there's a lot more evidence that says, in addition to common sense, I might add, "consistent with" is a lot more protection for the environment than "have regard to."

I think it's also interesting to point out that for those who came before the committee hearings I was at—when I asked them, "If you believe that 'have regard to' is strong enough, then what policy is it that you believe you will be having regard to and why do you believe that will be strong enough?" I can't think of a case where there was an adequate response, in my opinion, because the answer is that policy work is not completed.

Again, use common sense. Anyone who says "have regard to" is strong enough, to me is trying to pull a fast one because the thing that you're supposed to have regard to isn't yet in place, it's not finalized, you don't know what that's going to be. So how can you possibly argue that's strong enough protection to legitimize doing away with "consistent with?" It's absolute nonsense. The whole idea is to make development happen as quickly as possible because they want to generate jobs. But they don't care if they're decent-paying jobs, they don't care if there are unions representing the workers who have those jobs, they don't care about making sure there are decent benefits for those jobs and they don't care about

what it does to the environment. As long as it generates those jobs, that's all that matters.

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I suggest to the government that while jobs are important, two things: first of all, there are other ways to create jobs and secondly, jobs at any price is not a winning formula for the average working person. Fine if you're very wealthy and you can travel to any part in the world or buy your own piece of the north where you have your own escape, but for the rest of the population, where they live in their neighbourhoods and their immediate environs, that's it. That's where their kids are, that's where they are and it's their neighbourhood.

This government is saying those sorts of things don't matter as long as we can ram through development projects, create those jobs and we can stand up and rattle off the statistics and the rest of it doesn't matter. I suggest to you, with a great deal of respect for the responsibility that any elected government has, that's a total abdication of what the people of Ontario thought they were electing on June 8 when they bought into the Common Sense Revolution.

In the final remaining moments I want to spend some time talking about the fact that the Tory policy statements, in the draft form that they are, will clearly reduce the protection for wetlands in the province of Ontario. Again, for some people that sounds like somebody who's off on an environmental bent and it's one of those little things they get themselves all worked up in a lather over and it really maybe isn't that important.

The fact of the matter is that how we deal with wetlands in this province is very much related to our ability to have the ecosystems that I talked about earlier survive—critically important. In fact, in Hamilton—this was on February 26, where we were holding committee hearings in my riding, Hamilton Centre, Mr Al Stacey who is the chair of the Hamilton Region Conservation Authority which—by the way, conservation authorities are being slashed in the funding by 70% over two years by this government, the same government that contains backbenchers who want to pop up and profess their great concern for the environment.

This is the chair of the conservation authority in my community and here's what he said about wetlands, and I quote from Hansard:

"...wetlands are a cheap flood insurance. They're much cheaper than capital projects such as dams or any other man-made structures to control flooding. And certainly as a cost-effective means of securing the security of life and property in this province, on that basis alone, let alone for the protection of flora and fauna, I would argue: Don't allow wetlands to continue to be degraded. We have very few wetlands left in terms of predevelopment, particularly along the Lake Ontario shoreline itself. So certainly from an economic cost-benefit point of view, they're cheap flood protection. Fill in more wetlands, push the development into the floodplains, you're going to have more flooding and you're going to have much higher risk to both life and property."

That's the chair of the Hamilton Region Conservation Authority speaking to the importance of wetlands and this government is promoting and planning to put in place a

policy that reduces our ability to protect those valuable wetlands.

Why? Well, it gets in the way of those environmental projects. Got to ram them through. That's why they're cutting down on the time frames; that's why they're eliminating some public hearing processes; that's why they're watering down requirements for the environment. They've got to ram it through and get those jobs. If they're minimum-wage jobs with no benefits and no unions, well, so what? The fact is, we can stand up and spout off the stats that show we created the number of jobs that we said. It all fits, it's all part of the vision that Mike Harris has for Ontario and what a shame to see that vision.

To speak to my local community on this particular issue of wetlands, I want to point out that one of the issues that's been raised by my colleague from Hamilton East as well as others here is the Red Hill Creek Expressway. Part of the problem that's faced with regard to the—

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Workers' Compensation Board]): You are going to raise this?

Mr Christopherson: Absolutely I'm going to raise it. In the context of what we're talking about here, one has to talk about the Red Hill Creek Valley, because at the end of the valley is a wetland, and it's a class 1 wetland. That means that out of the seven classes of wetlands, this is the number one important wetland, and right now there is no approval for that expressway to link up to the QEW. It looks like they're going to have to go through or at least impact on that wetland, and the answer—or the request rather—from those that support the expressway is that there be an exemption from the Environmental Protection Act so that the concerns around this class 1 wetland will not have to be taken into account.

I worry that if that request is made from my local community, and it looks like it might be, this government will not care enough about the environment to say, "No, we will not allow that exemption." They are so convinced they've got to have their expressway rammed through that valley that I'm worried that the Minister of Environment and Energy will say: "Yes, we'll allow that exemption. There won't be an environmental assessment hearing." We run the risk of doing very serious damage to a class 1 wetland, and in this case it happens to be in my own community.

I want to move now to the last item that I'll have time to address this afternoon, and that is the effect on housing, because we know that part of what Bill 20 does is to take away the right to have basement apartments in the way that we did under our Bill 120. I know it was controversial in my own community. It's controversial across the province. But as Ms Jackie Gordon said, representing the Social Housing and Access Committee during the hearings into this bill held in my community, "We think the province has a very strong role to play in ensuring that people with low incomes and tenants have access to housing in every community in this province."

That's a philosophy that we agree with. We agree that you cannot allow people to continue to live illegally in units that are not safe, are not regulated, and have tenants who would fear to express and defend their rights under

the Landlord and Tenant Act for fear that they could be evicted because they don't live in a legal unit. And so we changed that law.

What's curious about the government approach to this is that this was a private enterprise solution that created 100,000 units; 100,000 units were created as a result of that bill that provided affordable housing for people in this province who need it. And given the way this government's slashing wages and laying people off, as you're planning to do with the privatization of a lot of the OPSEU jobs, there's going to be more and more people who are going to need affordable housing.

On the broader canvas, this government has said they want out of social housing. So there's an economic stimulation that was taken away, in addition to the right for people to have a decent and safe place to live: hundreds of thousands of dollars, million of dollars, in communities like Hamilton-Wentworth where there were commitments to build more affordable housing. Why?

During a recession it created jobs, but it's also an investment in our communities. To end on the point that I started with, why is that important? Because at the end of the day, if the economy isn't serving the people of the province, what's the point? By the economy, I am speaking of that activity which creates income for people which they then spend on their standard of living for themselves and their families.

1740

This government—and other reform parties like them—talks about the importance of family, yet they never speak of quality of life. They never speak of the communities. They don't speak of the damage that their policies are doing to families, to working people, because it's not a priority for them. The priority is: Create those jobs no matter what and get everything out of the way.

One of the members said earlier they had to "remove the barriers to grow." That sounds good as a slogan, but what that means for the average person is neighbourhoods and communities and cities that don't serve their citizens, because those barriers, as you call them, are the environmental protections, planning protections, health system protections, education system protections. That's what you've decided are barriers, because that's part of what's in your way to your fiscal bottom line and that's what you're attacking along the way.

I would also refer back to comments I made before the end of the year, in the last session, when I said it's unfortunate—because at that time we were still dealing with the fallout from Bill 26, the omnibus bill. I said at that time it's a shame that Bill 20 isn't going to get the attention that it deserves, because as much damage as this government is doing to the health care system, as much damage as you're doing to the rights of workers and the damage you're doing to the rights of injured workers and the damage you're doing to our education system, all of those things are a part of this. When you don't plan your communities and you don't think about the environment and the future when you're making land use decisions, you lower the quality of living for the average working person. Isn't bettering the lives of working people supposed to be the mandate of any elected government?

The Deputy Speaker: Questions or comments?

Ms Churley: I think my colleague from Hamilton Centre should be listened to when he speaks about these matters, because he does have a certain amount of expertise in this area from having served on council in Hamilton before. I find it unfortunate that it appears to me that many members of the government side seem to just take it for granted that those of us on this side of the House have nothing positive to offer. I regret that, because many of us do have a certain amount of expertise and can be helpful.

I regret very much that none of our amendments—we did force the government in two areas to make amendments, but that's because there was such a huge appeal from the public as well, including their friends, on some of these changes. Otherwise, not one amendment, nothing we said was listened to.

I think the connection the member for Hamilton Centre made between Bill 7 and the creation of jobs at any cost is a good one, but he left out something vital, and that is, it's also allowing some of their developer friends to make lots of money while creating some very bad development, and then cutting and running with a lot of money in their pockets. We know that's happened in the past.

The Premier, for instance, says, "Reform stands in the way of development, and balance has to be restored between environment and development." That's a negative and defeatist attitude. Development isn't bad for the environment; badly planned development is bad for the environment. There's just no reason why well-planned development can't go hand in hand—when we enhance the environment at the same time—with good development and job creation. That's the goal we wanted to create here which you've completely destroyed.

Hon Mr Jackson: I listened very carefully to my colleague the member for Hamilton Centre and I was rather surprised for him to bring up the example of the Red Hill Creek and the east-west corridor on his mountain in the city of Hamilton. The reason I was surprised is because I know the member, watched his career when he was on city council and how much he fought to have this economic development for his region. I saw him campaign against the Liberal member of this House, whose position changed dramatically one day in this House on the future.

I also watched in this Legislature almost from the seat he's in today while he sat on this side of the House and he and his government wasted three or four years of development in terms of the future of the Red Hill Creek and then we saw some capitulation. We saw him take the principles he enunciated in this House this afternoon about the environment and we saw how he was prepared to pave the Red Hill Creek and that he was then prepared to use taxpayer moneys to assist with—and frankly, this is an unfair reference, but it's like conscience money for the environment, to then take moneys from the public purse and to invest them into his community and his riding for an arts community on Barton Street.

You have every right to do that as a government, but quite frankly when I'm being told these principles that you were enunciating and your concerns about this report, I will tell you that the best parts of your contribution

were when you were spot-on with the economic development needs of Hamilton-Wentworth region. You articulated those in a very classy fashion on behalf of working men and women in the city of Hamilton. You did that when you were an alderman and frankly as a former minister of the previous government I would hope that you'd remember those fine speeches you made in Hamilton, lecturing the government of the day about the needs of your community.

We need an expressway in the Red Hill in this province and this piece of legislation before the House tonight will in no way damage the environment as it relates to the Red Hill Creek, because we're about to complete that project. Your government failed to do that.

Mr Grandmaître: I intended to speak on Bill 20, but I might as well use this two minutes to get on the record. The member for Hamilton Centre referred to affordable housing and he also referred to the 100,000 basement apartments or ancillary apartments, but he never used the word "illegal" apartments and that was the problem with Bill 163. They wanted to legalize 100,000 illegal basement apartments tomorrow morning. I thought this was completely wrong, for the simple reason that municipalities, building inspectors, the fire marshal's office, wanted to inspect these basement apartments to make them safe. It's fine to talk about affordable housing, but it has to be safe housing as well. Bill 163 didn't give municipalities the right or the access to these basement apartments to make them safe.

Bill 20, the reverse side of Bill 163—Bill 163 was too restrictive as far as I'm concerned, and now they're closing the gaps with Bill 20. I think this is totally wrong. Pretending that you're giving municipalities more power—those municipalities will wake up five years or 10 years from now and find out that those powers are not the powers that are needed to have sound planning in our municipalities in the province of Ontario.

Mr Tilson: I too would like to make a couple of comments with respect to our friend's comparison between Bill 163 and Bill 20. I too was present, as the former speaker was, when Bill 163 was passed and we were shocked at what you were doing with respect to the issue of basement apartments or ancillary apartments in areas that zoning had been planned by municipalities—essentially, you did away with zoning. Municipalities planned their municipalities for parking purposes, for schools, for roads, for environmental purposes as to whether an area should be high-density or low-density. That's what the whole principle of zoning is for, for the whole control of whether or not a certain number of people should live in that particular area or not in that area, and you took that all away. Bill 163 took that all away.

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I can tell you, we made a commitment. There is nothing new to what we're doing. We made a commitment during the election that we were going to do away with that principle, and that's what we have done. That's what Bill 20 has done. I can tell you that if you expected us to carry on with not allowing any planning for our communities—and that's what you advocated with Bill 163—we simply were not going to allow that to happen.

The whole idea of simply saying that an area is not going to have high density or low density—you had no regard for that.

Yes, I appreciate your concern for housing, but to do it with a complete disregard for planning in our communities—we simply could not understand that. That's the rationale as to the provisions, this particular aspect of Bill 20, why we did away with the terrible provisions that you were putting forward with respect to Bill 163.

Mr Christopherson: I thank all honourable members for taking the time to comment, even the negative responses. I still appreciate the interest and the engagement.

Let me start with my neighbour the minister responsible for destroying WCB, the member for Burlington South. I'm going to be quite interested in looking at the Hansard because I believe I heard you say that the expressway will do no damage to the environment. I'll be interested to see whether or not that is exactly what you said, but it wouldn't surprise me that you did, because it's part of that myth that somehow you can put that expressway through there without doing significant damage.

I would say to him that yes, there was a compromise. As we know, that's the art of politics. But David Crombie did come up with a compromise report that, by and large, had the support of environmentalists because it reduced it from an expressway to a four-lane arterial road using state-of-the-art environmental applications, such as cut-and-cover, and it was believed that we could still preserve the ecosystem and still bring back and enhance the valley to the benefit of the residents, which we cannot do given the plans with the expressway. But then, I don't expect you to stand here and represent Hamilton. I don't know why you pretend you do.

I want to say to the member for Dufferin-Peel that I appreciate his point, but as he knows, there is no clear right and wrong in many cases of creating laws. We have a Charter of Rights and Freedom and when we talk about where people can live, we're talking about some communities saying some people can live here and in other communities they can't, and the balance for us was that the Charter of Rights should take precedence. That had nothing to do with eliminating planning for neighbourhoods at all; in fact, it gave communities better tools.

I'm out of time, but to others who commented, I thank them very much.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Further debate?

Mrs Barbara Fisher (Bruce): I rise today to speak about Bill 20, An Act to promote economic growth and protect the environment by streamlining the land use planning and development system through amendments related to planning, development, municipal and heritage matters. Bill 20 is the result of a long consultative process that began with the Sewell commission in 1991. The commission, which undertook to streamline the planning process, consulted with interested parties over a two-year period and made recommendations to support better local planning with an emphasis on efficiency and timeliness. The Sewell commission laid the foundation for the changes that we are proposing today.

Those who actually use the planning system have told us that some of the changes legislated in Bill 163, the previous government's land use plan, are not achieving the objectives outlined in the Sewell commission's recommendations. The current system hurts Ontario's competitive position and leaves industry with a process that is too cumbersome and complicated. The government agrees. Ontario's current planning system has not fulfilled the requirement outlined by the Sewell commission to create a more timely and responsive planning system.

Bill 163 was supposed to utilize the Sewell commission's recommendations to increase local autonomy.

Interjection.

Mrs Fisher: No, I did, thank you.

But municipalities haven't been given more power; they were just given more tasks. Municipalities, planners and developers have told us that local decision-making is key to effective planning. The proposed changes in Bill 20 include a faster, less expensive and more understandable system, one which is guided by clear, concise provincial policies, policies which will deal with planning issues.

Bill 20 maintains tough environmental rules while clearing away obstacles to economic development.

Bill 20 also allows planning decisions to be made by the people—

Interjections.

The Speaker: Interjections are out of order.

Mrs Fisher: —who most understand local circumstances: the residents and the elected officials of the municipalities.

The revised provincial policy statements that accompany Bill 20 recognize the diversity and the needs of the municipalities. The statements ensure that sound development projects can proceed quickly without compromising environmental protection.

The points I wish to make clear today are that wherever possible, municipal autonomy is the best option, that environmental rules under Bill 20 continue to be tough, and that my riding of Bruce is an excellent example of how planning decisions made at the local level meet community needs and at the same time have regard to provincial policies.

The government is committed to giving municipalities greater autonomy to make decisions that affect their community. As a result, in Bill 20, municipal authority to regulate houses with second units is reinstated. Municipalities will once again be able to use their official plans, zoning bylaws, site plan agreements and plans of subdivision to decide where houses with second units will be allowed. Municipalities will have the option of setting up a system of registration for both new and existing apartments in houses. This will help ensure that safety standards are met by allowing a municipality to require a mandatory inspection as part of its registration system.

In Ontario's land use planning system, environmental standards are set out in provincial policy statements which guide the system. Bill 20 and the provincial policy statement continue to provide strong protection for both agriculture and the natural environment. Prime agricultural areas, provincially significant wetlands, woodlands

and valley lands are all protected in the provincial policy statement.

The purpose of Bill 20 is not to decrease environmental protection, but rather to streamline and speed up the planning process, to add flexibility, to increase local autonomy and to protect the environment in the context of economic development. By doing so, we will cut red tape in the planning development system that impedes economic growth in Ontario, we will strengthen municipal autonomy by giving municipalities greater flexibility and control over local decision-making, and we will continue to provide tough environmental protection.

Municipalities and developers have told us that the current planning system is slow and inefficient. Municipalities need greater autonomy and should be given further responsibilities. Provincial policy statements are too proscriptive and inflexible, and the implementation guidelines under the Planning Act are too long. This government is scrapping those parts of Bill 163 that do not work and bringing in a planning system that does work for Ontario.

The "shall have regard to" clause that will replace the "be consistent with" clause does not mean that policy statements can be ignored. On the contrary, it means that a decision-maker is obliged to consider the application of a specific policy statement when carrying out its planning responsibility. While Bill 20 does not give municipalities more flexibility in how they observe the policy statements, experience over the years shows that most planners and decision-makers, including the Ontario Municipal Board, know what this means and do take provincial policy statements seriously.

In my riding of Bruce, there are 8,563 hectares of provincial parkland, including natural environments, nature reserves and recreation facilities. These areas include such environmental features as provincially significant wetlands, archaeological resources, bedrock

and fossil features, and areas of natural and scientific interest, known as ANSIs, which protect life science communities and earth science areas. Over 40 of these ANSIs have been designated in Bruce county alone.

In addition, the dynamic beach allowance has been established at 45 metres and spreads along the Lake Huron shoreline. This dynamic beach allowance has been a major subject of concern to homeowners and municipal councillors alike. Under Bill 163, the increased shoreline development restriction in fact could prevent approval to rebuild existing residential dwellings in the event of fire or in the need of full replacement. This designation has also caused concern relating to property market values. Such a widespread designation is not necessary. However, all involved agree that the dynamic beach feature should be preserved.

The extent of environmental protection in my riding, most of it designated prior to the enactment of Bill 163, demonstrates that giving greater autonomy to municipalities to make planning decisions does not compromise the protection of the environment. Bill 20 provides the minimum standards that must be met. Local decision-makers are free, however, to set higher standards that meet community needs, and I might suggest such is the case in my riding of Bruce.

Creating communities which have cost-effective development patterns, an appropriate range of land uses and densities and the essential ingredients for economic prosperity are key goals of our Bill 20. This bill seeks to protect the province's prime agricultural areas, mineral resources, natural heritage and archeological resources for their economic and environmental benefits while providing municipalities with the autonomy they need to make planning decisions that are most appropriate for their community.

The Speaker: It being 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1801.

ERRATUM

| No. | Page | Column | Line | Should read: |
|-----|------|--------|------|--|
| 45 | 1789 | 1 | 49 | Brian, a grade 12 student at I.E. Weldon Secondary |

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No. 49

N° 49

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Thursday 28 March 1996

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Jeudi 28 mars 1996



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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 28 March 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 28 mars 1996

*The House met at 1003.
Prayers.*

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

FISCAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY

Ms Lankin moved private member's notice of motion number 8:

That in the opinion of this House, since the evidence placed before the standing committee on finance and economic affairs illustrates that the stated fiscal plan of the government will not work and that the government's commitment to deliver 725,000 jobs over the next four years is unattainable, given the current state of the Ontario economy combined with the government's plan to deliver a 30% reduction in personal income taxes at the same time as eliminating the deficit and that the evidence presented to the committee illustrates the contradictions within the government's fiscal and economic agenda as well as the damage it will cause in every community in Ontario, therefore this House calls on the government to recognize its responsibility to working men and women in this province and abandon its plan to introduce a 30% reduction in personal income taxes and instead the government should concentrate on the creation of jobs so that the economy will grow, the deficit can be eliminated and the accumulated debt reduced.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The member has 10 minutes.

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I recognize that, in some ways, the members opposite might think this resolution is a little bit of heresy, because in fact it runs in an absolutely contradictory fashion to the promises that the government made during the campaign in the Common Sense Revolution. I know that the 30% income tax reduction is one of the key promises and one they feel honour-bound to continue and to deliver. But I think it's really important that the members opposite take the time to understand the impact of their economic policy on the fiscal status of the province, on the economic status of the province and on the lives of men and women and families in this province.

There are times in government when you come to recognize that your stated plans aren't workable, aren't implementable or won't have the same results as you anticipated, when you should be wise enough to reconsider those initiatives. I believe very strongly that such is the case with respect to the 30% income tax cut.

Let me take the members opposite through the reasons that I've come to that conclusion. I don't argue that a 30% tax cut wouldn't be nice, I don't argue that people wouldn't appreciate having more disposable income; what

I do argue is whether or not we can afford the cost of that right now and whether or not it will provide any kind of benefit to our economy in the way in which the Premier argues.

Firstly, let me say to you that the cost of that tax cut over the next four to five years is in the order of \$27 billion. That's \$27 billion in a combination of lost revenue and interest charges that you'll have to pay on borrowing more money. You're going to increase the debt load in this province way out into the year 2001 as a result of sticking to this commitment to the tax cut.

For what reason? You argue because it will be a major economic stimulus. But every expert witness who came before the standing committee on finance and economic affairs disagreed with you on that. Even your own finance minister suggested that in the first couple of years there would probably be no economic stimulus from this initiative and that he couldn't quantify what the effect would be in the future. He just hoped that it would restore some sense of consumer confidence and some sense of purchasing power to people and that this would have a positive effect on the economy.

Fully two thirds of the value of this tax cut, the lost revenue that the government is going to spend—I mean, it is an expenditure in a sense; it's a very large spending program that you're undertaking here—will go to families that are earning over \$90,000 a year. I think it's a false argument to suggest that those families are going to immediately go out and spend the \$2,000, the \$3,000 or the \$5,000 that they will receive back in a way that will stimulate our economy. I've heard members opposite talk about people going out and buying fridges and stoves. How many fridges does a family making over \$90,000 a year need? This is not a valid argument.

In fact, all of the consumption studies that have been done indicate that families in that socioeconomic level will take that money and either pay down indebtedness or put it into savings or investments—mutual funds, whatever—much of that being offshore, investment in the Asia Pacific rim; not a benefit to our economy. Or as Professor John Crispo, a well-known supporter of your party, said the other night in a debate that I was taking part in with a member of your party and a member of the Liberal Party, he and his wife are going to take a holiday down south someplace with their money.

That is not money that is going to go back into the Ontario economy. There is tremendous leakage from that. So if in fact your goal is to stimulate the economy, I suggest you're using the wrong policy tool to do that. If you are absolutely committed to giving up that much revenue, then perhaps you should take a look at other mechanisms, a mix of different kinds of measures, including looking at sales tax, which would have a more

direct and immediate economic stimulus in the economy than the income tax cut that you have proposed.

But let me argue with you why you should not proceed down this line at all. We see economic growth being much slower than the government anticipated in the Common Sense Revolution, which means that revenues coming in to government are already lower than you anticipated in your own document, which means that the gap between revenues and expenditures is larger and you are already looking at a larger deficit than you anticipated.

1010

In order to make up for the money that you will be losing in revenue as a result of this tax cut, you will have to make cuts much deeper, much harsher than even you anticipated in the Common Sense Revolution. These are cuts that have a real impact on our communities, on our health care system, on our education system—we've already seen announcements of \$1.3 billion being cut from hospitals alone, which is only one part of the health care system; \$400 million being cut from our education system, with a minister who has promised that in fact that should probably increase to over \$1 billion; we've seen cuts in law enforcement; we've seen cuts in programs that support the very fabric of our communities. These affect real people's lives.

But perhaps it would be more persuasive with the group opposite if I make the argument based on economic conditions, because this kind of cut in public spending also affects our economy. You can't take \$8 billion out of the economy and not expect that to slow down economic growth and not expect that the thousands upon thousands upon thousands of public sector jobs that will be cut as a result of that massive reduction in expenditure will not affect the economy or consumer confidence. Let me tell you that people who are afraid of losing their jobs are not going to go out and buy and people who don't have a job can't go out and buy.

I know that in the Common Sense Revolution you went around and you told everyone: "Elect us and the investment will come. Our doors will be open and we'll just declare Ontario open for business and it will come." It's not coming, my friends. In fact, the enormous size of the cuts that you are making in public spending are very close to pushing us back into a recession at this point in time.

Again, all of the expert witnesses who came before the committee on finance and economic affairs urged extreme caution, urged that you understand that the economic effect of the cuts is a real one—the public sector is part of our economy—and that if you're not cautious about the approach that you take here, the combination of those massive cuts, potentially missing your deficit targets as a result of continuing with your absolute obsession with a 30% tax cut, all leads us to the potential of seeing recessionary pressures return to this province and massive job losses in the private sector as a result of that as well.

The Premier attempted some voodoo economics last week to tell us that the tax cut was going to pay for itself, that simply by cutting the economic stimulus that would be brought about in the economy would create jobs and then those people would be working and paying taxes and that in fact you weren't going to lose any

revenue, you were going to make revenue on this. I don't know; based on that theory, if that's what it's going to take, cut it by 60% and then we'll have full employment. It's nonsense and there is no one with any sense of economics who agrees with the Premier.

The Premier stands in his place and says they're all wrong: "The experts from the banks are wrong, the experts from the business community are wrong, the experts from the board of trade are wrong, the experts from the trade union movement are wrong. Everybody else is wrong but me." Why? "Because I believe in the Common Sense Revolution and everything in the Common Sense Revolution is the truth and we're just going to continue no matter what everybody else out there has to say about it, no matter what the impact is going to be on the economy and no matter what the impact is going to be on the Ontarians that we are elected to represent and on whose behalf we govern."

That is an irresponsible approach from the Premier of the province and from the governing party. You must understand the balance that must be struck between your Common Sense Revolution ideology and the real world in Ontario in which you govern.

I say to you, please take a look at what is happening in our economy. Please take a look at the fact that all the experts urge caution at this point in time, that no one believes that this is the right time for you to proceed with this tax cut except the taxpayers' coalition that made the Premier sign a promise that he would resign if in fact he didn't keep this promise.

Ms Isabel Bassett (St Andrew-St Patrick): This private member's resolution is based on faulty premises. Its basic premise is that the critics of the government are right and that the people of Ontario, who elected this government, are wrong.

This resolution is also highly selective in its citation of the witnesses who appeared before the standing committee on finance and economic affairs. A total of 78 groups and individuals appeared before the committee. Except for those groups that are heavily reliant on government funding, an overwhelming majority agreed with the government's commitment to reduce the deficit. They agreed with the government's commitment to bring down the debt-to-GDP ratio. Almost all the business groups agreed that expenditure cuts are absolutely essential to restoring market confidence in the economy and attracting investment and creating jobs. This is part of our fiscal plan that the member's resolution rejects.

The NDP resolution pretends that economists are agreed that the cure for high deficits, high debt and high taxes won't work. The fact is that economists are divided. As anyone who has dealt with economists knows, four economists can look at one problem and come up with four different solutions, yet the NDP's resolution makes a sweeping and unproven declaration. It says that the government's fiscal plan won't work. The fact is, members of the third party sitting opposite simply don't know that. The member for Beaches-Woodbine can speculate and even hope that the government's program won't work, but the member can only hope and speculate; nothing more. In fact, many experts believe that our fiscal plan is exactly what is needed to reduce Ontario from the

legacy of the NDP's profligate spending and tax increases.

Catherine Swift, the president of the Canadian Federation of Independent Business, said before the committee that, "We believe that cutting taxes and balancing the budget will improve Ontario's competitive position, which will enhance our attractiveness as a place to invest and do business and provide a direct boost to job creation." The Royal Bank also said that our policies will help attract investment and make Ontario competitive. Despite this, the NDP's doom-and-gloom resolution says that the government's goal of 725,000 jobs in five years is unattainable. Well, the member for Beaches-Woodbine can't know that. Again I say that the member is merely hoping and speculating.

Might I point out to you that the facts suggest a far more promising future in so far as jobs are concerned. There were 31,000 new jobs created in the month of February, the highest in the past 16 months. As Finance Minister Ernie Eves pointed out, this shows the confidence in our government's plans and the financial community is beginning to take heed and invest and create jobs.

Canada Trust said that international markets, in fact, are already treating Ontario's debt as if it had been upgraded. And the Council of Ontario Construction Associations already has said that the image of Ontario as a place to invest has improved greatly.

The NDP resolution also presumes that a cut in personal income tax will not be good for the economy. The members of the NDP sitting opposite are entitled to that view, but the people of Ontario simply don't agree. They voted for a tax cut last June. Last January, in the annual Maclean's poll, it showed that the majority of Ontarians continue to want a tax cut, and the presenters before the finance committee argued in favour of a tax cut. This included a wide range of business groups.

The fiscal program that this resolution rejects is based on our belief that cutting taxes will help create jobs and, coupled with our other initiatives, will create a favourable economic climate that will reduce the cost of the tax cut.

The NDP resolution pretends to speak in the name of working men and women of Ontario, the same working men and women of Ontario who voted for the party that promised to cut the provincial personal income tax rate by 30% in three years. Working men and women know that over the last 10 years income tax increases have outpaced their own income growth and that this simply cannot go on. They know that they need more disposable income and that the economy needs their money in order to grow, and in fact they are right. Weak income growth has been a major factor in holding back consumer spending, and a tax cut will give consumers more spending and borrowing power, as more than one witness before the standing committee on finance has pointed out.

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In a democracy, the voters are the ultimate experts. Presented with the NDP's fiscal record and the Liberal fiscal alternative, the voters gave a majority mandate to our party that pledged in a clearly laid out plan a 30% cut in the income tax rate and to restore prosperity to the province of Ontario. In the face of such an overwhelming

mandate for this government's fiscal plan, this NDP resolution is an affront to the collective wisdom of the voters of Ontario.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I speak in support of the resolution by the member for Beaches-Woodbine. The resolution in front of us makes a great deal of sense. No one is questioning the need for fiscal restraint. No one is questioning the need to deal with the deficit, with the debt, with the operating budget of this province. I think any of us who would have come to government, even on this side of the House or the NDP, would have had to deal with the fiscal reality of what we see today.

Let me remind my friends before we go on and on, before we get the "10 last years" speech again, in your own documents published by Ernie Eves, I would point out to you that the only time in 30 or 35 years in this province that there was a balanced budget was in 1989 under a Liberal government, something you weren't able to do.

Mr Chris Stockwell (Etobicoke West): Straighten him out.

Mr Agostino: What we're talking about here today is the tradeoff between your 30% tax cut and the price that people in Ontario have to pay for that tax cut. I think that some of the Tory members, Mr Stockwell and others, who have spoken in opposition to this cut make a great deal of sense and you should listen to them.

Mr Stockwell: Oh, get it straight. You are speaking on the opposition—

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): You got a letter—

Mr Stockwell: No, I didn't.

Mr Agostino: You should listen to them.

The Deputy Speaker: Would the member address his comments to the Chair, please.

Mr Agostino: What is happening as a result of this tax cut is that you're willing to sacrifice thousands of jobs. This government is willing to sacrifice thousands of jobs in order to give this tax cut. In my own community of Hamilton the average individual making around \$30,000 a year will benefit around \$700 as a result of your tax cut—\$700 based on a \$30,000 income. The average individual, not in my community but certainly in other parts of this province—bank presidents would receive about \$110,000 as a result of your tax cut. Now let me tell you what the tradeoff is.

The tradeoff is, first of all, the massive cuts that you've imposed upon municipalities, which mean that now that same average individual receiving that \$700 tax cut has to pay higher property taxes, higher school board taxes; has to pay for library usage; has to pay increased water and sewer fees; has to pay more money for the transit system. If you're disabled, you have to pay more money for Wheel-Trans, or DARTS in Hamilton. That is one reality of the cuts and what you have done to municipalities in order to finance your tax cut.

The massive cuts you have made to hospitals and health care: In Hamilton-Wentworth alone, \$27 million has been cut out of the health care system. That is the price that the person making the \$700 in gain from your tax cut has to pay. There's a potential for closure of St

Joseph's Hospital. That is as a direct result of your government's initiatives and the 30% tax cut.

We have calculated that in my own community the direct, firsthand job loss in Hamilton-Wentworth up to this point as a result of your transfer cuts is close to 5,000 jobs. That is a result of the transfer partners: school boards, universities, hospital, municipalities; 5,000 job losses in Hamilton-Wentworth directly as a result of your obsession with this wacky tax cut that you want to give in order to help your rich friends. That is the reality that my community and communities across Ontario have to face every single day. So you can tell those 5,000 people in Hamilton-Wentworth and explain to them how they're going to benefit from your tax cut when you no longer have a job, when you can no longer pay your mortgage, when you can no longer put food on the table because you don't have a job because this government's obsessed with this tax cut.

What I say to this government is that there is a time and there is a place to make those kinds of moves. It is not at the same time that you're trying to deal with the deficit, that you're trying to balance the operating budget of this province. That is the problem. The fault is not the concept of a tax cut. In the right economic circumstances, I think most of us would say a tax cut is the way to go. But to try to do it all at the same time forces you to cut much deeper than you would have to under normal circumstances.

This is why I ask this government to reconsider that, reconsider the tax cut, make the moves that are necessary to attack the deficit, to try to bring a balanced budget in this province in five years or three years or four years, whenever you try to achieve that. But to do it at the same time, I think is a price that is much too high to pay. It's a price that most Ontarians should not have to pay. It's a price, more importantly, that the individuals who don't earn that much money, individuals who are struggling, the working poor have to pay. That is the tradeoff.

If your son or daughter goes to McMaster University next year in Hamilton, you'll have to pay \$600 more for tuition. The individual making \$100,000 or \$150,000 is not going to feel it anywhere as much as the individual making \$30,000 or \$35,000. So I say to you, reconsider, bring some sense to this, listen to some of your backbenchers, listen to some of the Tories who have had the guts to come forward and speak against it. I would urge more backbenchers to have the same guts as these other members and ensure that the tax cut is put on hold. Do what is right. Forget what you've committed to; do what is right for Ontario.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I'm pleased to have the chance to rise and speak in support of this resolution presented by the member for Beaches-Woodbine, which essentially—

Mr Stockwell: So predictable.

Mr Silipo: The member for Etobicoke West says I'm predictable. On this one, yes, absolutely. I feel very good being predictable in supporting my colleague from Beaches-Woodbine in advocating, as this resolution does, what I thought the members opposite were very much in favour of, which is good common sense.

The approach that this government has taken is to say that the main reason for the tax cut is because it's going to stimulate the economy and create the 725,000 jobs. How many ministers and how many members of the government have we heard say to us that the tax cut is the primary job creation incentive of this government? The reality is that it's not going to work. It's not going to work, not because we on this side say it's not going to work; it's not going to work because people who know more about the economy than many of us in this room do are also saying it's not going to work.

We can quote, I'm sure, anyone that we want. We can always find a quote that will support what we want to say and we can play that game as long as we want, but the reality is that there was not an overwhelming consensus by even the expert witnesses, the economists who appeared in front of the finance committee, who said: "Yes, go ahead. Do this tax cut and you'll see the 725,000 jobs." I think the member for St Andrew-St Patrick will have to admit that there was no one who was that strong in their belief that in fact this would do the job.

I think it's important that the government recognizes that, but we know that in fact this government seems to be very hard and fast on this issue because the Premier himself seems to be very committed personally to the tax cut, as I say, not because it's been shown economically to work, certainly not when you look at the social costs that it's having in terms of the cuts to health care, in terms of the cuts to classroom spending, in terms of the cuts to the justice system—all promises, by the way, I remind the members opposite, that this government also made in the election, that they would not cut funding in those areas. Yet they're having no problem in moving away from their promises in those areas. But somehow, when it comes to the tax cut, that one is sacred, that one they have to stick to, that one they can't move away from.

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I think we need to ask then, what is the point if it's not to create the jobs? The Minister of Finance himself, when he appeared before the committee, said to us that he doesn't expect any real job growth coming out of the tax cut for the first year after the tax cut, maybe a little bit in the second year after the tax cut. So we're pretty close to the end of the term by that point and the jobs aren't going to be there. They're certainly not going to be there by virtue of the tax cut and yet the devastation that we're seeing across the province, the dismantling of service after service in our school system, in our health care system, in the law and order of this province, in the everyday life of the people of this province—people are being hurt, and all because this is the one promise that Mike Harris is intent on keeping.

We know, as the member for Beaches-Woodbine has pointed out, that in fact the people who will benefit the most by this tax cut are not the average citizens of this province, but they are the wealthiest 10% to 15% of taxpayers across this province. Now, the members will argue, everyone is going to see the benefits of the tax cut. Of course, everyone will get some tax cut, there's no denying that.

I also want to remind members opposite that they were the ones, and in fact Mike Harris was the one as the Taxfighter who said, "There's only one taxpayer in this province." Remember that, "There's only one taxpayer." So when you give people a tax break—and I remind you that for the average taxpayer in this province, it will be relatively small—by reducing their provincial taxes, and you force school boards, municipal councils, to put in place user fees, to put in place increases in property taxes, what happened to your concept of one taxpayer, because they are going to be paying a lot more through those increases in taxes than any benefit they will ever see from the provincial tax cut?

So gone is your concept, I say to the members opposite, of the one taxpayer. I don't understand at the end of the day what's left other than the fact that Mike Harris has staked so much of his personal reputation on this 30% tax cut and is shifting the wealth and the power from all of us into the hands of a few. That's really what's at the base of this. It's wrong, and the members opposite should realize that it's wrong and withdraw from this position.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): I welcome the opportunity to speak against this motion. Before I begin formally, I just want to indicate that I was the member from the government in the debate the other day with the member for Beaches-Woodbine, and it was interesting to note that her comments were that she agreed the expenditures had to be cut, she agreed that job creation had to come from the private sector, and I thought for a moment we were approaching a conversion, but I know it was too much to hope for. In any case—

Ms Lankin: You should represent my position correctly. That is a misrepresentation of what I said.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Spina: As a member of the standing committee on finance and economic affairs, I also heard the suggestions put forward by groups and organizations representing a wide variety of interests.

The motion states that this government cannot deliver its promises made in the Common Sense Revolution, and this is not the case. Our government's balanced approach to reduce the expenditure and lower taxes is achievable, and the budget forecasts are on target. The need for the tax cut today is more important than ever before. The people of Ontario want a tax cut. They voted for a tax cut. We will deliver a tax cut.

The government wants to indicate to all the taxpayers of Ontario that we will follow through on our commitments. The 30% tax cut was not a cynical attempt to grab votes. There is a deep concern among the public about their personal wellbeing, their ability to make ends meet, and the concern is that the future holds little for their children and our children. Because we want to create hope, we have to create opportunity, we have to create jobs.

In the past decade, taxes have been raised 65 times, and 11 of those increases were personal income tax increases. That's more than one per year for the last 10 years. Our burden is among the highest in North America. This high level of taxation discourages job creation and economic growth.

The resolution states that the government should concentrate on the creation of jobs so that the economy can grow and the deficit and debt will be eliminated. Our government is doing just that. Tax cuts are part of that job creation plan.

I want to add that growing the economy does not mean government spending, as the union economists indicated during that presentation—that government spending was the method by which job creation would be achieved.

We also heard about comparisons between our government and those from other jurisdictions, particularly the United States and the supply-side economics during the Reagan presidency. For years, Liberal and Socialist parties alike have misrepresented this era as an example of the failure of conservatism and that those Reagan-style tax cuts were misdone. Many times we have heard the left wing and Liberal mantra, "The rich are richer; the poor are getting poorer." We heard it in the last 20 minutes. Here are some of the facts that the opposition will not tell you.

According to statistics obtained from the US Census Bureau, the treasury office, the federal reserve and the Congressional Budget Office, from 1982 to 1989 the following occurred: 19 million net new jobs were created, two thirds of which were middle to high-paying, resulting in the lowest unemployment rate in 16 years. Secondly, the economic growth from the tax cuts increased federal revenue by \$1.1 trillion.

Ms Lankin: Wait a minute, what about defence spending? Defence spending had a lot to do with that, not a tax cut.

Mr Spina: That's correct, reductions in the marginal tax rates actually caused an increase in total revenue.

The tax cuts also produced, I might add, a 76% jump in new business investment, and tripled the rate of productivity growth. That's what the tax cuts resulted in.

To get to the issue that only the rich benefited from this process, real family income increased every year from 1983 to 1990 in every income group from the poorest fifth of households to the richest fifth, and the poorest fifth increased by 12%. Well, what about the poor? The median income for those who were in the bottom fifth, or the poorest group, increased by 77%; the richest fifth increased by 5%, so the poor benefited more proportionately than the wealthy, contrary to those opposition critics.

Why did the US not balance the budget?—and the honourable member for Beaches-Woodbine brought that forward—because the Democratic Congress would not allow the Reagan government to implement the spending cuts that he had proposed, and that is the fundamental difference between that approach and our strategy. First, we will reduce the spending, then we will reduce the taxable income.

In New Jersey, the state government enacted a 30% income tax cut. In the first two years, they saw a net increase of 117,000 jobs, and the Governor has publicly stated a tax cut is financing them itself.

Ms Lankin: That's where Mike got it from.

Mr Spina: There was an article in the paper the other day that the BC Premier, an NDP Premier—

Mr Derwyn Shea (High Park-Swansea): A Socialist.

Mr Spina: Yes. He is looking to implement a 30% tax cut in his government, in a broader scope, and his statement was that this would make the Harris tax cuts in Ontario pale by comparison. This is from a Socialist Premier leader, and this is his strategy to balance the budget. I'm just ecstatic.

The reality is that there is a need for tax cuts.

Ms Lankin: Really, what are you going to do with your tax cut?

Mr Spina: The biggest critic says, "What are we going to do with our tax cuts?" I, unfortunately, did not have the opportunity to ask the union leaders who made a presentation to our committee what they were going to do with their tax reduction. Madam Casselman, at least \$86,000 a year salary—what is she going to do with her \$4,000 tax cut? These are the people who are going to benefit as well as the lower-income people. It's the rank and file that will benefit from these tax cuts.

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As a government, we cannot always act to prevent corporate downsizing, but we can continue to create the climate that ensures that lost jobs are replaced with others, and we must add that opportunity for work. The plan that our government has promised to deliver will work because it is responsible, it is effective and it is balanced. It promotes jobs in the private sector. It spends less of the taxpayers' hard-earned money. The coming months and years will challenge us all.

The interesting thing and what was consistent and what I heard from the presentations at the committee was this: A reduction in retail sales taxes causes a hard jump in consumer spending. A reduction in personal income tax will cause purely a psychological jump in the short term, but the real benefit will come after the first, second and third year. That's where the consumer spending comes. That's where the job creation comes. That's where the benefit of a real tax reduction comes, and that is the impact that this government wants to make, because we need a long-term positive generation plan.

That's why we are here and that's why I'm against the motion and that's why I am in support of a personal income tax reduction.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, for the kind opportunity to contribute to this resolution which is so compelling on this day.

I'm very much in favour of this resolution because I think it deals with what is now the primary issue of the day in the province of Ontario, the one that has long-term implications. Most of what the government is doing today is based upon the fact that it wants, or at least a few people in the government and key advisers to the government who are not elected want, to ensure that we have a tax break in Ontario in the amount of 30% for the income tax.

The problem with that is it is attractive for a government. The other problem the government has, I understand, is that it gave a commitment during the election campaign that it was going to do so. So I can understand the dilemma that members of the government face, but I think the people of this province would be very receptive

to the government giving an explanation on why it would not proceed with this tax cut.

The Minister of Finance said yesterday that they haven't cut any taxes yet, and I agree that in fact that was the case, that they had not cut the taxes. But all of the measures that are being taken by the government are related to the fact that the government wishes to deliver an income tax cut of 30% on the most progressive tax that the province has under its jurisdiction, that tax being the provincial income tax.

It is transferring the responsibility, financial obligations particularly, to local municipalities, boards of education and agencies, and they have to, through user fees, which are the most regressive form of taxes, get that money for those services. In addition to this, they have the option of raising property taxes.

We saw in Peel county yesterday a board of education in the region of Peel which was desperate in this particular case for money because the province has cut back so drastically on funds to that board of education, so they offered as an option a user fee on bus services. This was obviously not popular with people, and that's understandable to the people of Peel, but that's the dilemma that the government is placing boards of education and other local agencies in by this tax.

I have been very impressed with some of the news reports I've read about members on the government side who have themselves—some of whom are endeavouring to leave the precinct this morning—indicated some concern about the potential of this tax break. The member for Wellington, Ted Arnott, now a veteran member as far as the Conservatives are concerned, has written a letter to the Premier calling it a reckless obligation. I've respected the member for Wellington's views on issues for a long time.

There are other members such as the member for Etobicoke West, the member for Etobicoke-Lakeshore—there must be something in the water down that way—and the member for Grey-Owen Sound, all of whom have a good political nose and know what people are saying out there, who understand how important it is to be able to deliver good services to people and not to borrow money.

One of the reasons we have a strike which OPSEU is involved in at this time—and we hope it is concluded today—is because the government is cutting so quickly and so drastically and not looking at the consequences of those cuts. As a result, we're in a difficult situation in Ontario.

Again, I was at family and children's services' annual general meeting last night and I was talking to an individual who is involved in a business. He was asking about what was going on at the Ontario Legislature and so on. This person didn't realize that the government of Ontario was going to have to borrow over \$20 billion in order to give a tax break which would largely favour the most wealthy in our society. This person was genuinely shocked, and he said, "Well, where do you get these figures?" I said in the Common Sense Revolution, this document. It says right there that the revenue losses to the government are anticipated to be over \$20 billion over the term of office. So here's a government which

says—and many people agree—“We have to address the problem of the deficit,” that is going to increase the deficit. It's going to increase the borrowing needs by \$20 billion. In my view, that's exceedingly important.

That's why I'm supporting this motion today, because of the cuts to our services and because you are going to have to borrow the money to be able to deliver on this. I think the resolution is timely and all members of the House should support it.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I am very pleased to participate in this debate this morning and to congratulate my colleague from Beaches-Woodbine, who has introduced this resolution. I think it's very timely and important that we have a debate on the approach this government is contemplating for economic stimulation in the province.

We've seen the announcements made by the government since taking office that have produced a climate of vulnerability, concern, worry, people not sure whether they're going to have jobs or actually receiving pink slips so that they are facing layoff, and we know the government is proposing to significantly downsize the public service.

I was very interested in the comments of my friend from Brampton North in that he indicated that the reason the government is contemplating an income tax cut rather than a sales tax cut to stimulate economic growth and jobs by stimulating expenditures was that a sales tax cut would produce immediate sales, sort of a blip where the sales would increase but then might decrease later on, while an income tax cut would be longer term. He indicated, though, that an income tax cut would not take effect really for two to three years down the road. People, I guess, initially might use their additional moneys to go on a holiday to Florida or to the Caribbean or they might pay down debt or whatever, so that wouldn't stimulate spending, but two or three years from now there might be spending that would produce jobs.

So essentially what he is saying, I guess, is that the people the government is laying off now will be out of work for two or three years and then they will hopefully have the opportunity to receive jobs because at that time jobs will be increasing because there will be a stimulus down the road. So what we're looking at, I guess, is a two- or three-year Harris recession that might then improve as spending and investments improve at that time, according to the member for Brampton North—I guess just in time for the election, they would hope.

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The problem is, I'm not sure this whole approach will work at all because the government, as we know, is committed to balancing the budget and reducing the deficit. If you're also going to be doing that while at the same time having a 30% tax rate cut, the cuts are going to have to be so deep and so widespread that we're going to see many, many people laid off. We know that somewhere in the neighbourhood of 20,000 people will be laid off in the Ontario public service.

We're headed for significant cuts in education because of the cuts in transfer payments: \$400 million this year, which really works out to \$1 billion, which the minister, Mr Snobelen, has said is a good thing. That will lead to

a layoff of somewhere between 10,000 and 15,000 teachers in this province. Of course, the government promised it would not affect classroom education and we know this is going to adversely affect classroom education. It's impossible to lay off those numbers of teachers—one third of the total workforce of the East Parry Sound Board of Education received pink slips yesterday.

In the post-secondary sector, we see chaos in the community college system because of the layoffs that have been announced, thanks to the cuts by this government, and serious increases in tuition fees for students in the college sector and the university sector.

In health care, we're going through major restructuring. We all accept that there needs to be restructuring. The minister has announced target cuts of 4% or more for most hospitals. In my area, this means that we are facing significant cuts to the Plummer Memorial Public Hospital and the General Hospital in Sault Ste Marie, which have already followed through with integration and amalgamation; they've merged, as governments have wanted them to do. Now they're facing these additional cuts on top of that. In my own communities, in Richards Landing and Thessalon, it means they are going to close the two community hospitals in those areas and turn them into 12-hour clinics: no emergency service, no beds.

This is just unacceptable because it's being driven by a fiscal plan that is unworkable and doesn't add up. It's going to mean layoffs and fewer jobs and fewer services that the people require, rather than a truly worked-out, reasonable health care plan for the community.

I fully support my colleague's resolution. It's timely. It makes absolutely no sense to be contemplating this kind of income tax cut at a time when they're trying to balance the budget and cut the deficit. I'm very worried about the effects it's going to have, specifically on education and health care.

Mr Gerretsen: I get very concerned when I hear members of the Conservative caucus talk about balance. They've already stolen our real slogan, that we stand for the real common sense in this province, and now they're even stealing our slogan with respect to the balance of things. We heard it yesterday with respect to the planning legislation. They claimed the new act is balanced when we all know it's a sop to the developers and the building industry in the province.

Now this morning we hear that this is a real balanced approach, to take \$8 billion out of the expenditure side of things and at the same time also cut personal income tax by 30%. It's not very balanced for all those people who got cut 22% last year as far as the social services are concerned in this province. It's not very balanced for all those civil servants who are going to lose their jobs as a result of the privatization effort this government's involved in. It's not very balanced for all those individuals who are really hurting out there on a day-to-day basis.

To talk about personal wellbeing as the last Conservative member mentioned, it's the personal wellbeing of all Ontarians we ought to be concerned with, not just the personal wellbeing of those people who are in the higher

income brackets. I think that's the one thing this government has completely lost sight of.

I too am totally in favour of a balanced budget, with no deficit, but I say to you that anybody I've spoken to who has not been involved in the political field over the last seven or eight months completely concurs that there should not be any tax cut whatsoever for anybody until we reach that position where we don't have an annual deficit. At that point in time, we can talk about cutting the tax rate. It just doesn't make any sense whatsoever, when you're running a \$10-billion deficit annually, to start cutting on the revenue side of things as well.

There's one other interesting thing, and I realize my Conservative colleagues won't want to hear this, but it's my understanding from doing a little bit of reading in this that most economists will agree that a combination of drastic cuts to government expenditures and a 30% tax cut will not have a stimulative effect at all on the economy. It will have a contractionary effect on the economy. Just about every economist agrees on that. You cannot have it both ways. That's what this government's trying to do and it simply will not work.

There are some members of the Conservative caucus who obviously have realized this and they are speaking out openly and writing openly to the Premier. All I would suggest to all the other backbenchers here is that you can actually have an influence on this, you can do it, if you just do the right thing, talk among yourselves, let the cabinet know, "Look, fellows, this is one promise that maybe we should hold back on until we've licked the deficit problem in this province, and thereby we're not hurting other people in this province."

We totally and fully support the resolution as presented.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): In the four minutes I have left, I make the following points. The first is that this is really a question of the tax cut the Mike Harris government is bringing forward. It not only doesn't add up, but I would argue it's a failed policy. It has been tried in other jurisdictions. We don't need to look far; we need to look at the United States with regard to what Reagan did in his term in government. His whole idea with regard to economic stimulus was the Star Wars program, and the other part was a tax cut. All we got with the tax cut in the United States was, not more jobs being created but a higher deficit. They increased the deficit to record numbers in the United States because it meant that the very revenue the government needed to balance its budget was being taken out of its overall budget. It doesn't make a lot of sense.

If the government is really serious about doing positive things to get the economy going and to create the jobs and the wealth needed to have the revenue to be able to balance the budget, there are positive ways to do that. Really, that's what is at issue here.

Rather than looking at positive measures such as supporting the mining industry through the types of programs we had in place under the Ontario mineral incentive program and the Ontario prospectors assistance program that the government has cancelled; rather than doing positive things like keeping the northern Ontario heritage fund in place so you have the leverage dollars

necessary to form partnerships with the private sector, so that they can go to the banks and other people to raise the dollars to start up new enterprises or to add to what they are doing, in examples we have seen throughout Ontario; rather than trying to do positive things such as working with the labour movement and with employers where companies are failing or are in difficulty, such as we did in Kapuskasing and in Sault Ste Marie and in Toronto with de Havilland; rather than looking at positive things, the government says, "We rely on two basic principles."

The two principles are: They're going to create a tax cut, about which, in the long run, I say we will be proven right. It will increase the deficit over the long run. It will not do anything to create the economic stimulus because the money's not going to the very consumers you want it to go to. It's going to the consumers at the higher end of the income scale; in other words, the people who have the biggest bucks will probably spend most of their tax cut on some holiday in Florida or Bermuda.

The second thing you're doing that I think is really wrong is that you're also, rather than looking at positive measures, doing quite the opposite. You're saying, "We will lower the standards by which we control various issues around labour, the environment and the other mechanisms that we have in our economy so that we can compete with capital from places like Mexico, the Far East and other places, so that we can lower our standards so low that people will come and invest in our province because we will not have an onerous regulation system or we will not have the kinds of things the Conservatives believe stop the economy."

I say that's wrong. The Minister of Economic Development and Trade stood in this House last week and said that the youth employment programs we now have in place are in danger of being cut, meaning we will not have the money to hire the students this upcoming summer. What he was relying on for the private sector to hire students was to make Ontario's minimum wage the lowest in all of Canada. I say, shame on the Conservative government. When the Ontario government stands in this House and says the only idea they have to increase economic activity to create jobs and wealth is by lowering standards, such as cutting the minimum wage, I would say that is a step in the wrong direction.

I support the resolution that my caucus colleague has brought forward from the NDP. The tax cut will only compound the problem over the longer term. It will deprive the government of the revenue that it needs to balance the budget in the longer term and it will make the cutting exercise it's doing all that much more difficult. They're going to have to cut further to be able to get a balanced budget in five years.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Beaches-Woodbine to wrap up.

Ms Lankin: The member for St Andrew-St Patrick says that I hope and speculate that their plan won't work. First of all, let me say directly to her, as someone who has spent all the years that I have in public service, I do not hope for a bad economy; I do not hope for joblessness. I believe very strongly in working with people all

across the broad political spectrum to try and achieve the best for the people of Ontario.

You say I can't know what the results will be. I ask you how you know with such surety that your tax cut will produce the 725,000 jobs, the economic growth, the wellbeing that you seem—I'll use the same words back to you—to pin all your hopes on when every expert who has come forward has urged caution.

You say I'm selective in the groups that I cite. Let me cite the board of trade, which ideologically supports the concept of a tax cut but which said, "Please be careful," because you're going to go out and borrow the money to pay for the tax cut; you're going to cut deeper in order to try and get to a balanced budget; you're taking money out of the economy faster than the economy can absorb; and you may miss your deficit targets. They weren't unqualified in their support.

This is not about balancing the budget. This is about keeping a promise that the Premier signed a pledge to and if he didn't keep it he would resign. Thousands of people are going to be laid off in this province as a result of your actions of cuts in order to make up for the lost revenue from that tax cut. Thousands of families, their dreams and their lives are going to be affected as a result of that. Why? To protect the Premier's job.

You say the voters voted for this tax cut. They voted for a tax cut when they were promised there would be no cuts to health care, no cuts to education and no cuts to law enforcement. You've broken all those promises. The one promise you should break is the promise on the tax cut, for the sake of the people and the economy of Ontario.

1100

MOTORCYCLES

Mr Beaubien moved private member's notice of motion number 9:

That, in the opinion of this House, the Minister of Transportation should bring forth amendments to the Highway Traffic Act which would incorporate a change to the inspection requirements and performance standards for motorcycles in regard to the present handlebar height regulations in the province of Ontario.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): I have been hearing about tax cuts for the past hour. As the member for Kingston and The Islands mentioned, I would like to bring some balance. I'm looking for a raise, not in pay, not in taxes but in handlebars.

The present Highway Traffic Act regulation 611 reads as follows:

"(3)(e) No part of the handlebar shall exceed a height of 380 millimetres above the uppermost portion of the operator's seat when the seat is depressed by the weight of the operator."

That regulation was probably adequate in the 1960s, when we had Easy Riders, when motorcycles had ape hangers and were portrayed as if people were hanging from their motorcycles. However, this is 30 years later, and I would strongly suggest to the members that the regulation should be changed.

For instance, I think we have progressed, when we look at automobiles today, in that we have seats that are adjustable and we have steering-wheels that tilt. We try to make the driver of the vehicle comfortable. Consequently, probably it makes the driver drive a little more safely.

If my good friend the member for Lake Nipigon were here today, I would strongly suggest that if I were to drive his vehicle, I probably would adjust the steering-wheel according to my needs and certainly would adjust the seat according to my needs. On a motorcycle, the operator does not have that option, and I think it's about time that we start realizing that people who operate motorcycles do have a right to comfort and safety.

However, many of the motorcycles today are considered illegal by the present standard. Such motorcycles like the Honda Gold Wing, the Yamaha Venture Royale exceed the 380-millimetre height. I would strongly suggest that those two motorcycles are not motorcycles that you would speed on. I'm sure that you could speed with them, but basically those motorcycles are the ma-pa type motorcycle whereby you, Mr Speaker, or myself, if I were a motorcycle driver, and maybe some members of the opposition, if they had their balance properly, would probably ride these.

The province of Saskatchewan and the province of British Columbia, along with many of the southern states, have already addressed this particular problem. They've seen fit to change the regulations to accommodate drivers for the 1990s.

As I've mentioned previously, we have done that with the automobile. Again, if we have an operator who's six-foot-six sitting in a car as opposed to one who's five-foot-two in a car, I'm sure there's going to be some changes made to the tilt on the steering-wheel and the seat position. However, a motorcycle driver does not have that option.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): What about adjustable seats?

Mr Beaubien: Well, I think maybe some seats should be adjusted across the House or so. It would be more reasonable to assume that we should provide a little bit more flexibility to motorcycle operators today.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Don't attack us yet. You don't know where we stand on the issue.

Mr Beaubien: So I think with the regulations that we have in place today, we insist on maintaining the height of the handlebars on the motorcycle at 380 millimetres.

I am not a motorcycle operator. However, I'm told by experienced motorcycle riders that it can be very uncomfortable for some people, especially if you're over six-foot-four. Many of today's motorcycles, due to style, comfort, practicality and safety, have handlebar heights which are illegal in this province. It is unreasonable to expect uniform measurement for handlebar height if the operator is not of a uniform size.

I am proposing the following revisions to the regulations, and that is basically what British Columbia and Saskatchewan have done: (a) would be so that the secured maximum height to which the handlebars extend is not higher than the top of the driver's shoulders when

the driver seat is occupied, and (b) that the handlebars do not exceed the overall width provided by the vehicle manufacturer.

The above two recommendations would make it more comfortable for the operator of a motorcycle and it certainly would not jeopardize the safety of the operation of that unit. Furthermore, we have enough safety standards in the province today to make sure that all the safety standards are abided by.

Mr Gerretsen: Where is this stuff coming from, anyway?

Mr Beaubien: "Where is this stuff coming from," as the member for Kingston and The Islands says. I also bring to your attention, the member across the hall, that the Bikers Rights Organization, Ontario, favours these changes.

Mr Wildman: Yes, but they don't like helmets either. What's your position on that?

Mr Beaubien: Well, no, they do like helmets.

With regard to making it more comfortable for a person to operate an automobile, we had seen the light 30 years ago. I know some of the members were not around in those days and it's hard for them to understand the words "comfortable" and "reasonable." However, I think it's about time that we, as a government in this province of Ontario, started giving the same rights to motorcycle operators. I think it would make it much easier if we had some flexibility for a motorcyclist to adjust his throttle, his clutch, his turn signals and his brakes. The more comfortable we make the operation of a vehicle, I would strongly suggest that the safer the operator will operate his vehicle.

1110

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): We are, I think, very interested in this amendment really, and it's an amendment which I think is very sensible and reasonable.

Mr Chris Stockwell (Etobicoke West): Get your motors running. Get out on the highway.

Mr Colle: Born to be wild, yes.

The member for Lambton is going to contribute to a bit of an improvement in terms of the way this regulation is enforced because one of the problems that arises even for police officers is trying to make a judgement call on a highway in terms of the number of centimetres. I think this will make it much easier for enforcement. Like the member for Lambton says, I think most motorcyclists in the province are representative of a cross-section of citizens. They're taxpayers and they do certainly deserve fair and equitable treatment. This seems to be in line with what BC and Saskatchewan are doing, and it's very easy to understand that it would again be of benefit to the motorcycle riders across Ontario.

I would like to say that as much as we hear all the negative inferences about motorcyclists, there are thousands and thousands of very decent, law-abiding citizens who ride motorcycles in the province and I think this is of benefit to them. I've been involved with a number of people in the annual Ride for Sight which is held every year in Fenelon Falls—and this year it's going to be on June 15 in Fenelon Falls—where motorcyclists from across Ontario raise money to fight blindness. They raise about \$1 million a year. They ride from Whitby Towne

Centre up to Fenelon Falls, and then they spend the weekend in Fenelon Falls. There's family camping. There's a dry area of camping. Then there's the Bikers for Christ. From all walks of life they come together and they raise \$1 million for eye research. This money goes towards fighting retinitis pigmentosa, which is a degenerative eye disease many Canadians are afflicted with.

I can put that on the record to show that I think there's no reason why we can't listen to the motorcycling community, which thinks this would be a benefit to it. I applaud the member for Lambton in bringing this forward as a minor adjustment to the height of the handlebars, which makes it easier for them and I think easier for enforcement for the police officers.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Up front, I would say I don't have a real difficulty in supporting what the member is trying to do. I take it what he's trying to do is accommodate a request that he has either had as a parliamentary assistant to where he is or in regard to his constituents back in his riding. Whenever possible, I think we, the members of the House—

Mr Stockwell: Yes, parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture.

Mr Bisson: Agricultural people do have motorcycles, you know. I have to tell you, a lot of my friends who are out in the farm community have bikes.

I think what we should do whenever we can, in private members' hour, is when we see members coming before the House trying to advocate something that makes sense for their constituents, we should at least in this forum try to keep out of partisan politics and try to support that member's efforts.

I would say just a couple of things, however, in regard to motorcycles and what has happened I think over the past 10 or 15 years when it comes to bikes. I think Mr Stockwell, being of my vintage and age, a fairly young man, barely in his 40s—we all remember very well growing up, when we were younger in high schools. Motorcycles were something that were very affordable as a means of transportation for young people of my generation when we were growing up and going through high school. Most of us, I would say, who wanted to buy a motorcycle to have transportation, because cars were a bit more expensive and not as much fun to drive, obviously, as a motorcycle, were able to do that.

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): In Timmins?

Mr Bisson: No. I have to say to the member for Algoma-Manitoulin that Iroquois Falls, which is a community of about 5,000 to 6,000, right next to Timmins, has probably one of the highest motorcycle populations I've seen in most communities, I would say throughout Ontario.

Mr Colle: Can you prove that?

Mr Bisson: I can prove it. There are individuals in Iroquois Falls—

Mr Colle: Mimico's got the most bikes.

Mr Bisson: Mimico? All right. I think Iroquois Falls is a close second.

Mr Colle: You've never been in downtown Mimico.

Mr Bisson: Actually, I have. The point I'm making is that at one time it was very affordable for a young person

to go out and say he wanted to buy a motorcycle for his means of transportation and enjoyment. We've seen over the years a real erosion of that. Insurance on motorcycles over 750 ccs has gone up quite dramatically over the past 10 or 15 years to where it's really out of the reach of a young individual 18 or 19 years old wanting to buy a motorcycle as a means of transportation.

I own two motorbikes. I have a Honda Gold Wing, a classic 1973 strip, black, beautiful machine, and I have another one which is an offroad-onroad 350 XT. For myself as an older driver with driving experience, the insurance is fairly expensive but affordable, and with my income level I'm able to afford that as a pastime. I very much fear that what's happened with the insurance, because of some of the problems that have been associated with accidents with motorcycles, especially with younger people, is that we've seen the insurance literally go through the roof to where, if a young person wanted to buy a bike today, let's say a Gold Wing or maybe one of the low riders, it would be \$1,800 to \$2,000 a year, really unaffordable.

I would hope that the government—and I see the parliamentary assistant is here; he was listening—can try to do something about that, because I think young people today are responsible; they're looking for a means of transportation. If we can try to support them in doing something about insurance rates for motorcycles specifically, I think it would be a step in the right direction.

I only have one concern to the motion being put forward. I know you worded your resolution in such a way that you're giving some latitude to the Minister of Transportation to look at this to see what is the safest thing. I think there is a certain danger in having motorcycle handlebars up excessively high. It doesn't give you the kind of control, especially in tight situations, that you would like to have to really be in control of your motorcycle in the event that something happens and you've got to react quickly. I'm not quite sure that I'd want to see motorcycle handlebars allowed to be as high as you're talking about, but I think the ministry would look at this in some detail and try to figure out what's a good compromise that would allow your resolution to go forward.

My good friend Mr Cooper, a former member of this assembly, if Mr Stockwell remembers, had brought forward a resolution to this House some two or three years ago. If I remember correctly, I was reminded by one of the members that it was a motion supported by all members of the House, and I think the motion read something like, "In the opinion of the House, we are in favour of motorcycles, as they use less of everything." If you remember that one, it was quite an interesting debate.

Mr Gerretsen: I think we supported it.

Mr Bisson: We all supported it, actually. I would say I will support the member on the basis of what he's trying to do. I hope that, in working with the ministry, they try to look at what is a safe compromise in regard to that. I just say to my friend across the road, keep your motor running, and we'll see you on the highway some time.

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I am pleased to rise in the House this morning to support the resolution that is being proposed by my colleague the member for Lambton. I believe the fundamental issue that the member

for Lambton is attempting to deal with by proposing this motion is an example of the outdated regulations in this province at the moment. Other provinces have dealt with this same issue by amending their regulations to create a much more commonsense approach.

Currently in the province of Ontario, there exists a regulation that states that handlebars on a motorcycle cannot be more than 380 millimetres above the uppermost portion of the operator's seat when the seat is depressed by the weight of the operator. What kind of a regulation is that?

During the days of the infamous chopper, this type of regulation may indeed have had its place. When a motorcycle has handlebars that are excessively high, there is a serious safety problem not only for the driver of the vehicle but indeed for the vehicles that are in the vicinity of that motorcycle.

1120

The days of the chopper are over, and so should be the regulation regarding the 380-millimetre height limit. The regulation needs to be amended, and it appears that the member for Lambton has made an interesting proposal on how the regulation should be amended. It is important to note, as we've heard this morning, that some of the most common touring types of motorcycles that are currently travelling our roads are considered illegal by today's standards by as much as four inches.

Let us spend a moment to consider how other jurisdictions have dealt with similar regulatory changes. According to the Saskatchewan Gazette that was printed September 1987, regulation 230(a) and (b), where amended, the vehicle should have handlebars that have grips that are no higher than the shoulders of the seated driver and do not exceed the overall width of those provided by the vehicle manufacturer. Again, the province of British Columbia suggested, in order-in-council 7/86, which dealt with the same problem, that the maximum height to which the handlebars extend is no higher than the top of the driver's shoulder.

The difference is that Saskatchewan and BC regulations allow some freedom of modification. As many cyclists have noted, we have tilt steering-wheels and adjustable seats in our cars to allow improved comfort and control of the vehicle; why in the name of goodness should we not have that in motorcycles? To maintain a regulation that expects the same 380-millimetre height restriction for an individual who is five feet tall or six feet, whatever it might be, is not a commonsense approach. The length of an individual's arms, size of their upper body or their riding position greatly differs, and we can certainly see that among some of the members in this House. A uniform height for handlebars does not make sense when the people riding these vehicles are different shapes and sizes, which often creates a situation where some riders are operating the motorcycle unsafely.

The original intent of the regulation was to promote safety during the era of the chopper style of motorcycle. That era is behind us, and so should the regulation be. If motorcyclists are permitted to adjust their handlebars to a comfortable position to a maximum height of their shoulders, then they will be in a much better position to control the motorcycle in a safe manner.

Currently, the private vehicle inspection safety certificate program that is in effect in Ontario has done a good job of keeping unsafe motorcycles off the road. However, it is worth pointing out that many owners of motorcycles are being fined for violating provincial standards but that no import standards exist when these motorcycles are brought into the country. So we have a situation where motorcycles, regardless of the size of the handlebars, are allowed into Canada, but you cannot legally operate the vehicle because the province states that handlebars do not comply with the 380-millimetre provincial regulation.

Those in this House who love to impose new regulations, and we've had a lot of them in the last five or six years, will respond to that situation by saying we should lobby the federal government and have them impose import standards on bikes. The real solution to the problem is to amend the current provincial regulation by adopting similar wording as in the province of Saskatchewan.

I support this resolution as put before this House by the member for Lambton. It ensures that safety will be maintained and yet allows the operator of the motorcycle some flexibility and ensures that the rider will be more comfortable on the bike. By doing so, by increasing that comfort, it will make a much safer and far more alert rider than we currently have on the road. I do support this resolution.

Mr Gerretsen: Let me also stand in support of this motion. I've found that these private members' sessions on Thursday morning are very educational, because most of the motions and resolutions that have come forward have been very reasonable and have been very supportive. It's like the last resolution, which was put forward by the member for Beaches-Woodbine: very reasonable. Forget about the tax cut until we've got this deficit under control.

I could get very political with the member for Lambton and say, yes, we'll support this one if you support that one. But you know, I would never play those kinds of games because I'm totally against that sort of thing. I guess the real question that we have to ask here is—

Mr Colle: "Who cares?"

Mr Gerretsen: No, not, "Who cares?" People do care. But with all the influence that this member has within the current government—and his influence is very substantial—and with the reasonableness of this particular idea, why hasn't the ministry done something about it over the last six to eight months? I've heard it being referred to by the last member as a change in the regulations. We all know that regulations don't have to come here. Regulations are passed by cabinet. They're introduced by a member of cabinet and they're just passed and they're implemented.

So I'm somewhat disappointed that this member, with his tremendous influence as parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, has not been able to convince his own caucus cabinet members of the wisdom and the reasonableness of this resolution and just have it done, rather than us dealing with this matter in this session this morning. I would suggest to him to in the future talk to his cabinet colleagues first. I'm sure you could set up appointments with them, if not

here in Toronto then in their local constituency offices. I'm sure they do see people from time to time. Maybe these kinds of good ideas can be brought to the foreground and can be dealt with a lot quicker.

It has raised a number of other very interesting issues, though, because one cannot possibly think of motorcycles without thinking about the condition of the roads in this province and the potholes that are out there. We heard about it yesterday when Pothole Palladini I think was trying to blame the federal government, was trying to blame Mother Nature, was trying to blame all sorts of other people etc about the condition of the potholes not only on the major roads of this province, but also on all of the highways and byways and country roads etc. I would suggest to this member that he put just as much effort into trying to convince the Minister of Transportation to actually do something and correct these situations that we have with respect to the roads.

Yesterday I had an opportunity to look at an old budget of 1969, which was the last balanced budget that the Tories ever had in this province: 1969, 27 years ago. What was very interesting to read from that document was that the amount of money that the province then was spending in the area of transportation was some \$400 million, if my memory serves me correctly, which was about the same amount of money that was being spent on health care at that time. We know that since that time the health care costs have just ballooned to over \$17 billion, but the influence of the various ministers of transportation and the transportation departments in this province has declined, and declined to a point where I think in the current budget only about \$200 million is being spent provincially for the maintenance—

Mr Colle: Sixty per cent of the roads are substandard.

Mr Gerretsen: Sixty per cent of our roads are substandard, and all those motorcyclists who will now be on the road under those new regulations that undoubtedly will be passed will have to drive on roads with huge potholes, risking their own lives and safety, probably with much ruin to their vehicles so that their insurance costs will escalate on a monthly or a daily basis. I'm quite sure that the member for Mississauga West, or North—where is it?—who is currently working on all these insurance regulations—I'm sure, according to the newspaper reports anyway, he won't succeed any more than the previous committees that have been set up to look at the Insurance Act will succeed.

Mr Rob Sampson (Mississauga West): Oh, John, that's unfair.

Mr Gerretsen: It may be unfair and I hope to be proven wrong. I hope you will actually be able to do something about the insurance rates in this province.

Again, to the member for Lambton, we support your resolution, at least I do, and my honourable colleague here who is the critic for transportation. We're totally behind this resolution.

With all the influence that you have within the government, please talk to the Minister of Transportation about the real problems out there. Fix the potholes, make sure that by doing that we can do something about the insurance rates and about the health and safety of the citizens who use our roads on a day-to-day basis.

Let your real influence be shown within this government on some real, meaningful issues, and don't bring issues like this that could have been dealt with by regulation before this honourable body, because I'm sure we can discuss much more meaningful things, such as, for example, the 30% tax cut, which we all know should not occur in this province until we have a balanced budget.

1130

Mr Wildman: I want to congratulate my friend from Lambton for bringing this matter before the House. This is of course the real purpose of private members' hour, that individual members can raise matters of public import which may not be central to the agenda of the government but which are of importance to his or her constituents or to a particular constituency across the province.

In this case I understand he's responding to the bikers' rights organization, and I would never want to label them as an interest group, because it's not my view that we should label groups, as this government seems wont to do. But I'm pleased that in this case the member is responding to the concerns of this organization. It does seem to make sense that we would have a regulation worded in such a way that motorcyclists could in fact be comfortable on their machines, so that they can properly control the machine, particularly in emergency situations. So I congratulate the member for bringing this matter forward.

I would raise a couple of concerns, however. It seems to me we have to have some sort of definitive limit on the height of handlebars. I know you've said not higher than the rider's shoulders, but I've seen some bikes that are operated in such a way that they don't seem safe for the rider or for the other members of the travelling public.

I'll give you an example. A number of years ago I was driving on Highway 17 between White River and Wawa, and there was actually a lot of traffic, which is unusual for that section of road. There was quite a lot of traffic, and there were two lanes of traffic. It was in the summer, I think in July, a bright, sunny day, good visibility and so on, but the traffic was moving rather slowly because there were a lot of trailers and trucks.

All of a sudden, I heard this very loud noise which startled me, and right beside me, one of these—I think it's called a hog—one of these great big motorcycles—I'm not sure of the make; I think it may have been a Harley-Davidson, but I'm not sure—went right by me along the centre line of the road between the two columns of traffic.

Mr Gerretsen: How fast were you going?

Mr Wildman: I was going just a little less than the speed limit. That motorcycle was going much faster than the speed limit and it was very dangerous. I'm not suggesting that most bikers would travel this way—I know they don't; they're not unsafe—but this guy was taking an awful chance. All that had to happen is for one of the vehicles to be a little farther over than he'd expect and there would have been a terrible accident. He went right through, but the point is that he was leaning way back, he wasn't sitting upright, and his handlebars were

up above his head. The front wheel of the motorcycle was one of those that looks like a bicycle wheel, a very small wheel.

Mr Stockwell: Did you make a citizen's arrest?

Mr Wildman: I was too scared.

Obviously, that kind of motorcycle I don't think would be in compliance with the regulation that the member for Lambton is proposing, but I suppose this guy might argue that for him it was comfortable to lean backwards when he was riding and therefore he needed to have very long and high handlebars.

The other thing that was worrisome when I first listened to the debate from the member for Lambton was he wasn't just talking about height, he was talking about width, and at first I thought he was talking about not having—he said the handlebars should not be above the shoulders of the rider and they should not exceed the width and I thought he was going to say of the rider, but I think he then said it should be the width proposed by the manufacturer for the motorcycle—because I have seen some motorcyclists that that might be a problem.

There is another area, though, I want to raise. I know that you have seen these other very different types of bikes, motorcycles, that are like racing bikes. They're called low riders. The handlebars are right at the level of the machine, and the rider has to lie on the motorcycle as if he were in a motorcycle race. I just can't believe these are safe machines, and I'm wondering how your regulation deals with that kind of a machine. Could this individual say, "Well, for me comfort is lying down, and therefore I want to lie down on the machine and ride with the handlebars very, very low"?

Mr Gerretsen: You can't say "lie" in here.

Mr Wildman: No, you're only not allowed to say, "Lie awake at night."

Quite seriously, I would like the member for Lambton to address this question of these very low-rider type of machines and whether or not we should have a limit on how low the handlebars can go.

Mr Bisson: How low can the member get? That's what I want to know.

Mr Wildman: In other words, how low can you go?

Other members have raised somewhat extraneous issues during this debate which I think is rather unusual. Most people would want to keep to the principle of the issue and to deal with this in a very serious way in the way that the member for Lambton has raised it. But I would indicate that I do have some sympathy for those who have said that we have to look at the condition of the roads on which these motorcycles are riding.

I also would like to know whether or not you're also talking about off-road motorcycles, the dirt bikes, and whether or not they would be included in this regulation. It's getting to the point now where in order to be safe on many of our highways you should be riding a dirt bike, not one that is meant for highway travel, because right now we have a serious deterioration on our roads. I know the road contractors—

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): You let it go for five years.

Mr Wildman: Well, we built a lot of highways in this area, as you know.

The contractors have indicated that the existing highways, rather than the new ones that government has brought forward and got the contracts going on or has planned, the existing highway system has deteriorated significantly, because we aren't doing the same amount of maintenance that used to be done. It used to be standard for the Ministry of Transportation to resurface and repair a road every seven or eight years. Now I think it's been extended to almost 15, and that means that the roads are in much worse condition than they used to be.

It's something we really should be addressing, because I would not want the member to come forward next year with a regulation saying that because of the safety issues related to the deteriorating condition of our roads we should only allow dirt bikes on our highways. I seriously want the member to address the issues I've raised and I congratulate him for bringing forward this resolution. I think it will be one of those few resolutions that might in fact actually lead to something.

Many people consider the private members' hour to be an hour of just esoteric debate, and I would never subscribe to that. Obviously, I've never thought of motorcycles as in any way esoteric, and I would think that members should bring forward issues that they consider to be important because they really want change.

I would hope that the member has discussed this at least with his pal Al and that he could in fact have some assurance that if the members of this House were to pass this resolution, it indeed would be moved forward, that the government would respond and listen to the members' opinions. I would encourage many members of the government and the opposition parties in this House to seriously consider this resolution.

1140

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The member's time has expired.

Mr Wildman: Mr Speaker, I would just say that I really do resent the fact that you haven't given me enough time to deal with this matter.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The Chair recognizes the member for Scarborough East.

Mr Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough East): First off, I'd like to say that I will be supporting the resolution of the member for Lambton. I'm Harley prepared for the comments that I have to make here today, and with only eight minutes, I don't want to hog all the time here.

I must say, since yesterday, when Mr Beaubien asked me to consider this, I've tried to get a handle on the issue and to come to grips with the many and varied facets of this issue. I know that it's been frustrating for the members opposite to not be able to talk about chops today and only choppers, but I think that Mr Wildman's comments about low riders are as close as we can get to a commentary about the positions in the polls of the various parties here today. But I'd like to stay on topic.

This is in fact a serious resolution brought forward by the member for Lambton and it's consistent with the government's approach to eliminate all sorts of silly and irrelevant and unproductive regulations that have cropped up over the years, not just the last 10 years, although mostly during the last 10 years, but even going back before then.

Comments have been made in the House earlier in this debate that this regulation dates back to a time of the ape hangers, as they were called in the chopper craze in the late 1960s. As the member who spoke previously commented, there are those who have taken it to an extreme, and none would argue that handlebars that are higher than the shoulder pose a serious hazard to others on the road.

The requirement right now that no part of the handlebar shall exceed a height of 380 millimetres above the uppermost portion of the operator's seat when the seat is depressed by the weight of the operator really is not appropriate, because many of the motorcycles which are imported legally into this country have stock handlebars that exceed that. So there's the irony. In this province we have vendors selling motorcycles, legal for sale in this country, legal for sale in this province, that the moment someone sits on them become illegal because of the height of the handlebar. But the duties and taxes have been paid. The federal government has got their pound of flesh. Every other province would allow you to sit on that motorcycle and head on down the highway looking for adventure or whatever comes our way.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): Potholes.

Mr Gilchrist: Or potholes, looking for potholes in Kingston.

But seriously, the incongruity that here in Ontario we've set a standard that makes a Honda Gold Wing or a Yamaha Venture Royale illegal is really quite silly.

The resolution the member has proposed would prefer that we instead go to what British Columbia has done, which says, "so secured that the maximum height to which the handlebars extend is not higher than the top of the driver's shoulders when the driver's seat is occupied," and also add a clause from Saskatchewan's act, that "the vehicle shall have handlebars that have grips that are no higher than the shoulders of the seated driver and do not exceed the overall width of those provided by the vehicle manufacturer" as original equipment.

Clearly, the fact that Ontario is out of sync with the rest of Canada should be motivation alone for all members in this House to give serious consideration to and vote in favour of this resolution. I'm sure that the member will then have greater assistance in his efforts to convince the Minister of Transportation of the need to change this regulation.

We have to remember that a lot has changed in the construction of motorcycles since the 1960s. They have become far more powerful. They have become far more expensive. They have got creature comforts the likes of which we had no idea would ever come to motorcycles: adjustable seats, AM-FM radios, the whole nine yards. I think the context of the new construction and the fact that every other province has seen fit to change their regulations to the new realities really should drive Ontario to follow their example.

As I said, this is consistent with our entire approach to regulatory change in this province. The Red-Tape Review Commission, chaired by Mr Sheehan, is looking at the 4,500 regulations with a view to eliminating untold numbers that do nothing more than vex and frustrate businesses and consumers in this province. It's also consistent with the committee, chaired by Mr Wood, that's looking

to scrap the agencies, boards and commissions that oversee those regulations or that promoted their creation; or, where they're not scrapped, change their terms of reference to make them more accountable to the elected officials in this province.

It's also consistent with our approach to all aspects of government. We're bringing common sense back to everything else we do; why shouldn't we bring it back to the shape and style of motorcycle handlebars?

I have done my best to treat this seriously, Mr Beaubien, and it is a serious issue, but I think at the end of the day it's more symptomatic of the kind of problems that our government inherited where we have products legal for sale elsewhere in Canada that somehow, as a result of disinterest or a lack of education in the last few years, we have seen our predecessor governments fail to make the necessary regulatory changes for.

I certainly support the resolution put forward by the member. I think it's high time we make this change. I'd just like to end by saying that I hope my comments will accelerate the decision-making on this issue. I prompt all other members and I encourage them to support this worthy resolution.

Mr Gerretsen: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: The member talked about the potholes in Kingston. I know we do have a problem there, but no worse than any other municipality. Let me just say that for those students who were there in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, as the honourable member was, if they were—

The Deputy Speaker: That's not a point of order.

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I have enjoyed this last sparring on the potholes. I have to agree with the member that the roads are all very bad nowadays, partly because of the winter conditions and partly because of the lack of maintenance. I have had a chance to travel in the last couple of months to Ottawa and the Kingston area on a variety of government business and I have to agree that you have to negotiate your way, if you can, if there isn't too much traffic, to avoid some of the larger potholes, let alone with a car, but especially with a motorcycle.

Speaking on that particular issue today, not to trivialize the issue—which I support, by the way; I support the member for Lambton and his resolution—I would say that one good reason for lowering the handlebars is so the driver can have a good view of the road ahead and make sure that he may deviate from some of the potholes on the road. That is one of the benefits of the resolution by the member.

I would agree with one of the previous speakers that if the resolution indeed will pass to legislation, it will find speedy acceptance by the other side, and the minister as well. I do congratulate the member for bringing this forth, as it is some reason of safety. Nowadays I think we have to intrude, if you will, as little as possible, but interfere with those matters when safety is at risk, not as much sometimes for a particular driver himself or herself, but for consideration of the other drivers.

The other thing that is a little bit perhaps stunning is that when the House seems to find acceptance on a particular private member's bill or resolution, not too many people have much to say. Perhaps it's because of the issue itself, perhaps it's because members feel, "Since

we agree with that, maybe there isn't too much to say about it."

However, it is a good resolution. I support it. Let's hope this will find speedy acceptance by the government.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate? The Chair then will entertain two minutes by the presenter.

Mr Beaubien: First of all, I would like to address the comment from the member for Algoma with regard to, "Comfort is lying down." I don't even want to touch that one, because I could be incriminated in doing something illegal.

With regard to the member for Kingston and The Islands, I would point out that his party was in power from 1985 to 1990 with regard to regulation 611. That party didn't see fit to change it.

My concern with this entire issue is the safety and comfort of the operator of a motorcycle. We have designed and altered automobiles in the last 25 years whereby the comfort and the safety of the driver are of the utmost importance, yet we keep on insisting on antiquated regulations when it comes to motorcycles. We have to face the reality and use common sense. How can we expect a six-foot-six person to abide by the same standard as a five-foot person?

This issue has been dealt with in most states and in the provinces of Saskatchewan and British Columbia. Also, changing the present legislation would make enforcement of this regulation much easier. It is time for Ontario to address this issue and change its regulation to allow the operator of a motorcycle similar comfort and adjustments as we have done with automobile drivers. This province has always been concerned and will continue to be concerned with the safety on our highways. Why not provide comfort and safety to the motorcycle operator? After all, isn't safety our most important issue?

FISCAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): On ballot item number 15, private member's notice of motion number 8 standing in the name of Ms Lankin, is there anybody who objects to this coming before the House?

All in favour of the motion? Is it agreed?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

This item will be put over until after the next ballot.

MOTORCYCLES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): On ballot item number 16, private member's notice of motion number 9 standing in the name of Mr Beaubien, is there any member who objects to this coming before the House?

On the resolution then of Mr Beaubien, shall the motion carry? Carried.

Call in the members; there will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1154 to 1159.

FISCAL AND ECONOMIC POLICY

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Ballot item number 15, private member's notice of motion number 8,

standing in the name of Ms Lankin: All those in favour will rise and stay standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

| | | |
|----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Agostino, Dominic | Cooke, David S. | Marchese, Rosario |
| Bartolucci, Rick | Crozier, Bruce | Miclash, Frank |
| Bisson, Gilles | Gerretsen, John | Pouliot, Gilles |
| Boyd, Marion | Grandmaitre, Bernard | Pupatello, Sandra |
| Brown, Michael A. | Gravelle, Michael | Sergio, Mario |
| Castrilli, Annamarie | Kormos, Peter | Silipo, Tony |
| Churley, Marilyn | Lankin, Frances | Wildman, Bud |
| Colle, Mike | Laughren, Floyd | |

The Deputy Speaker: All those opposed will rise and stay standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

| | | |
|------------------|-------------------|-------------------|
| Baird, John R. | Gilchrist, Steve | Sampson, Rob |
| Bassett, Isabel | Guzzo, Garry J. | Shea, Derwyn |
| Beaubien, Marcel | Hudak, Tim | Skarica, Toni |
| Boushy, Dave | Johns, Helen | Smith, Bruce |
| Brown, Jim | Kells, Morley | Snobelen, John |
| Chudleigh, Ted | Klees, Frank | Spina, Joseph |
| Doyle, Ed | Leadston, Gary L. | Stewart, R. Gary |
| Eves, Ernie L. | Martiniuk, Gerry | Tilson, David |
| Fisher, Barbara | Maves, Bart | Turnbull, David |
| Flaherty, Jim | Munro, Julia | Vankoughnet, Bill |
| Ford, Douglas B. | Newman, Dan | Wettlaufer, Wayne |
| Fox, Gary | Parker, John L. | Wood, Bob |
| Froese, Tom | Pettit, Trevor | Young, Terence H. |
| Galt, Doug | Preston, Peter | |

Senior Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Journals (Mr Alex D. McFedries): The ayes are 23, the nays are 41.

The Deputy Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

It being past 12 o'clock, this chamber stands adjourned until 1:30 o'clock this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1203 to 1331.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

INSURANCE AGENT EXAMINATION CENTRES

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): I rise before the House today to ask this government to address another issue of inequality in the province of Ontario.

As the Minister of Finance opposite knows, there are no Ontario insurance examination centres in northern Ontario. This has been a long-standing grievance of insurance companies in the north, as the lack of access to this licensing process has impeded their ability to bring on new agents as quickly and efficiently as in other parts of the province.

Whereas prospective agents can walk into centres in Toronto, London or Ottawa, write the examinations and receive their results within a one-day period, applicants in northern Ontario must sometimes wait three months or more before getting even the simple authorization to write their exams. As you may well imagine, the resulting delays and inconvenience are a great source of frustration for would-be agents and the insurance companies looking to hire.

But there exists a simple solution to this northern Ontario dilemma, and I would encourage the minister opposite to give due consideration to a pilot initiative brought to my attention by the Thunder Bay Life managers. They have proposed a system to me where the initial authorization to write qualifying examinations is eliminated and replaced by an opportunity to write the examination locally upon request. I would point out that this proposal would not result in any additional cost or administrative burdens.

There is no reason for those of us in the north to be treated in this unfair and inequitable manner when the minister can so easily fix it himself. Minister, do the right thing. Help us create more jobs in the north.

NORTHERN AIR SERVICE

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): Mr Speaker, I rise today to bring to your attention this government's complete disregard for the people of northern Ontario. Specifically, I want to talk about the people of Chapleau. When norOntair makes its last flight tomorrow, the town of Chapleau will be completely without any form of reliable public transportation—no buses, no trains, and now no planes.

The Minister of Northern Development and Mines clearly stated that communities will have air service after norOntair is forced out of business, and now, through his complete incompetence, the communities of Chapleau, Hornepayne and Gore Bay will be without air service starting April 1. This minister is not an effective advocate for the north. He should be called the minister for southern development and mines.

Bill Davis and Leo Bernier, both Tories, understood the difficult transportation problems that people in the north face every day. That is why they created the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission. The Liberals also supported ONTC's goals and objectives, as did the New Democrats. All three governments have seen the need for norOntair, and now the Harris government, in its short-sighted quest for its tax break for the rich, is shutting down norOntair.

The minister made a half-hearted attempt at putting an interim deal together with Voyageur Airways to serve the community of Chapleau for a limited time, but this deal has fallen through, and tomorrow the people of Chapleau are without reliable public transportation. The people of Chapleau have been done a disservice by this government.

SAMANTHA WALKER

Mr R. Gary Stewart (Peterborough): I rise in the House today to congratulate a remarkable young individual in my riding.

Tomorrow, Samantha Walker of Peterborough will be one of 12 young people from across the province to be presented with the distinguished Ontario Junior Citizen of the Year award by Ontario's Lieutenant Governor.

The Ontario Junior Citizen of the Year award program is coordinated by the Ontario Community Newspaper Association, with financial assistance being provided by Bell Canada.

The award was created to honour young Ontarians who have demonstrated an act of commitment to their communities, and I am proud to say that Samantha Walker has indeed demonstrated that commitment.

Samantha has assisted a young student from Korea to adjust to life in Peterborough, she has been active in local girl guides, she has organized a tulip-planting event on Remembrance Day and she has served as a community ambassador for visiting dignitaries such as the Lieutenant Governor of Ontario and the Consul General of the Netherlands. She has participated in all these functions while still maintaining an A-plus average in school.

On behalf of the people of the Peterborough riding, I want to congratulate Samantha for receiving this distinguished award. She truly is a remarkable citizen of this province.

LONG-TERM CARE

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): One of the most effective ways of evaluating a government in any society is to examine the way it treats those who are vulnerable and require the help of others. In this regard, I urge the government today to redress the unfair way in which long-term-care resources have been allocated to seniors in the Niagara area.

The Niagara District Health Council has made representations to the Minister of Health which reveal that Niagara, despite having one of the highest per capita populations of seniors, ranks 32nd out of the 38 health regions in long-term-care funding. More disabled people wait for support services from the March of Dimes than those who are actually served by it.

Alzheimer patients, who critically depend on support services in order to cope in a more humane way with this devastating illness, continue to suffer from unacceptable delays in receiving respite care. Indeed, all 28 people in Ontario waiting for Alzheimer counselling services are in Niagara; 25% of those waiting for Alzheimer disease day programs in Ontario are also located in this region; and lastly, more than half of all Ontario families waiting for Alzheimer-related respite care reside here as well.

I urge the government to implement the plan, which has been put forth by the health council in an expeditious, responsible and effective manner, creatively targeting ways in which health care dollars can be saved and rerouted to help those who so desperately need care and who by any measure have been treated unfairly in the past.

MINISTER OF COMMUNITY AND SOCIAL SERVICES

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): My statement is directed at the Minister of Community and Social Services.

On October 3, 1995, the minister said in answer to a question from our leader: "To the leader of the third party, there are many places where you can buy tuna for 69 cents. In fact, even if it's not priced at 69 cents, quite often you can make a deal to get it for 69 cents."

Five members of the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty decided to follow the minister's advice. They went to a

Loblaw's store in downtown Toronto and tried to "make a deal" at the checkout. For their troubles, they were charged with trespassing.

The five go to court on Monday, April 1 of next month.

The minister, I understand, has been asked to be present and has been called as a witness. The defence will be that of "officially induced error," and the defence would obviously have their case enhanced if the minister would appear.

On March 22, 1996, a lawyer from the Attorney General's office representing the minister has indicated very clearly that they want the summons the minister has been issued to be withdrawn because he has no intention of going to court.

I think it's incumbent on the minister to not only say what he says here in the House but to go out and defend it.

MARJORIE LEWSEY

Mr John L. Parker (York East): I rise to congratulate Marjorie Lewsey, winner of this year's borough of East York Agnes Macphail Award. Marjorie was presented with the award this past Sunday at a special ceremony attended by many of East York's most prominent citizens and the Honourable Marilyn Mushinski, Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation.

The Agnes Macphail Award honours the memory of the woman who, as the member for York East, served in this House as one of Ontario's first female MPPs. It is presented each year to an East York resident who has exemplified and continued Agnes Macphail's tradition of community leadership.

I am pleased to have served on the selection committee this year and to confirm that Marjorie Lewsey is a very fitting recipient of this year's award.

Marjorie's contribution to East York's proud tradition of volunteerism has spanned many years and many causes. She has served for 12 years on the East York Mayor's Committee for Multiculturalism and Race Relations. She was the first woman president of the Universal African Improvement Association, Toronto chapter. She has been honoured also for her outstanding contributions to her church and to the causes of children, seniors, ratepayer concerns, families in need of housing, health care, penal issues, Junior Achievement and the preservation of community history.

I endorse the words of one of her many nominators, who said: "Marjorie Lewsey has made East York and Metro Toronto and Canada a better place for all. She has always been a beacon for others to be guided by."

1340

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE EMPLOYEES

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Today we have word that the OPSEU strike is nearing an end. While government members talk about popping champagne corks, I just wanted to reflect on what this strike was all about.

First and foremost, this strike was about workers trying to keep their jobs and trying to ensure there would be dignity for those whose jobs had to be lost. At some

point in the next few weeks or months, the layoff notices are going to begin. While Tory members celebrate, as many as 27,000 people will learn they no longer have jobs. For many, these are not happy times in Ontario.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the men and women who had the courage to stand up to this government. It is never easy to say: "I know this is going to mean sacrifice. I know this is going to cost me thousands of dollars." But these workers also knew the difference between what is right and what is wrong, they knew the difference between what was fair and what was unfair, and they were willing to fight for it. They put their money where their mouths are.

Against great odds, the men and women of OPSEU stood up to this government for what was right. They deserve our congratulations, for they believe balance, fairness and justice is what Ontario should be about.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION BOARD

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): My statement today regards the minister without portfolio responsible for gutting the WCB.

We've witnessed in the last couple of days the minister arranging for backbench members to lob him setup questions on public meetings he's attended, and I want the government members to know they're fooling no one. Injured workers know that this minister and this government refuse to hold public meetings on their slashing and gutting of the WCB. They've been holding all their meetings in the background. The only thing they've been doing in public is when the minister absolutely couldn't avoid going. He's had the audacity to stand in his place and say that when he is at these meetings he's getting concerns expressed from injured workers about the size of the bureaucracy and talking about the administrative structure. What a lot of baloney.

I was with injured workers this morning out front of your sham conference where you're planning to look at how you'll dismantle the WCB by taking examples from around the world. Those injured workers care about you slashing benefits, removing legitimate injuries from the ability to claim for compensation, shutting down the Workplace Health and Safety Agency, slashing workplace health and safety training for workers. That's what injured workers are upset about. That's what they have to say to this government, not the sham of questions that we see here with this play-acting every day in the House. Injured workers will not take this lightly.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Time has expired.

INTERNATIONAL PLOWING MATCH

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): It is my pleasure to announce that the last International Plowing Match of the millennium will be held in Huron county in the town of Dashwood.

I would like to congratulate Jerry Theil of Zurich and members of the committee for their diligent efforts in ensuring Huron county was chosen for the 1999 match. Neil McGavin and the committee made an impressive presentation to the Ontario Plowmen's Association on February

12 of this year, which I was privileged to partake in. The Ontario Plowmen's Association accepted Huron's bid to act as the host of the 1999 International Plowing Match late the same afternoon at the annual convention.

The residents and organizations of Huron county are backing this initiative 100%. The success of Huron's matches in 1966 and 1978 speaks for itself.

The generosity of Earl and Michael Becker and surrounding neighbours should also be recognized for graciously allowing the use of their land and farms as the site of the 1999 International Plowing Match, which covers nearly 2,000 acres. The match will be a community effort involving some 30 townships and municipalities working together on preparations over the next three years.

Plowing matches have drawn as many as 150,000 people. Therefore, it will be an economic spinoff for our entire area. I welcome you all to come and be visitors to the International Plowing Match.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): We have two former members in the east gallery. I'd like to introduce Mr Bud Gregory, a former member for Mississauga East, and Mr John Turner of Peterborough, a former Speaker. Welcome.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

EDUCATION FINANCING

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): On March 6, I announced on behalf of this government a strategy to help school boards bring education spending under control and to achieve savings of \$400 million for 1996-97. The \$400-million savings represents 3% of the \$14 billion spent on education in Ontario. It is clear that we must maintain and improve quality programming and at the same time find out-of-classroom savings in order to make our education system of real value to the people of Ontario.

The future of Ontario's students will be seriously threatened if we continue to spend beyond our means. Ontario spends close to \$1 billion, or more than \$500 per child, above the average of the other provinces. Our government is committed to developing an education system that is based on excellence in student achievement as well as accountability to, and affordability for, all Ontario taxpayers.

Over the past few months I have met with a number of parents, students and taxpayers, as well as trustees, school board officials and teachers, and have received suggestions on how to accomplish the necessary savings in education spending. Through these discussions, I have heard three clear messages: First, people believe that education savings can be achieved and that it is important for Ontario to bring its spending in line with other provinces; second, Ontario taxpayers believe there must be an opportunity to develop solutions locally; third, they emphasize that while it is urgent to address these matters,

we must allow time to ensure we maintain quality programming for our students.

Today I am introducing into the House the Education Amendment Act. This act will allow school boards to implement measures to achieve savings. The legislation includes amendments to the Education Act to:

Restore junior kindergarten as a local option by removing the mandatory requirement that school boards operate junior kindergarten;

Provide flexibility to school boards with respect to adult education by enabling school boards to direct certain adult pupils to continuing education credit courses;

Promote equitable impacts throughout the system by enabling negative grant boards to contribute their share of the savings;

Increase cooperation with other local boards and other public agencies by authorizing school boards to enter into cooperative agreements with other boards, public sector agencies and other organizations as prescribed by regulation, and require school boards to report annually on cooperative initiatives taken or explored to improve efficiency;

Provide flexibility to school boards by removing references to the number of sick days to which teachers are entitled, effective September 1, 1998.

The decisions for realizing the savings through the changes in the Education Amendment Act as well as other measures we announced on March 6 are based on three goals: Classroom funding should be protected, opportunities should be provided for local decision-making and locally negotiated solutions, and local taxes should not be increased.

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): You know you are hurting kids.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member for Oriole is out of order.

Hon Mr Snobelen: Our responsibility as leaders of the education sector is to create an education system that is excellent and affordable. We must ensure that overspending, and the resulting burden of debt, does not deny our children the quality education they need or the future opportunities they deserve. With the introduction of this bill, we are ensuring that we are fulfilling these responsibilities for the people of Ontario.

1350

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I truly marvel at the capacity of communiqués like this. There must be someone in your office who has participated in some fantasyland Republican wordsmith communication program and says: "Listen, the way you talk is, you don't walk straight; you just continue to promote myths and you continue to say things. You know what? People are kind of stupid, I suppose, and they'll believe it." Well, the people of Ontario aren't stupid.

What they're trying to do here, ladies and gentlemen, is provide themselves with the opportunity to take resources away from education. In the preamble, the minister says that this is to "find out-of-classroom savings"; three times in this communiqué. No acknowledgement that JK is classroom, that adult education is classroom, both of which—one for an option and the other totally cut.

In estimates, the minister and the deputy minister acknowledged, and my colleague the member for Algoma I think would concur, that this continual reference to the expenses in line with other provinces was a misnomer, that it was apples compared to oranges. It is not a fair comparison. The minister continually presents this as if it were fact.

The fact is that 41% of the students in Canada come from Ontario. How much does Ontario spend? Forty-two per cent of those dollars. Is this out of whack? I suggest to you not, let alone the uniqueness of Ontario and the demographics of Ontario and who makes up Ontario. Comparing them to other provinces is not the standard. Minister, you said you wanted to be the best in the world and you compare yourselves to the other provinces. We're behind five other areas—BC, Manitoba, Quebec, Northwest Territories. Is that our standard, right in the middle of the pack? Mediocrity.

"First, people believe that education savings can be achieved...." Of course they can be achieved when they're under duress, and that's what the school boards are saying.

You're saying local "taxpayers believe there must be an opportunity to develop solutions locally." Of course they have local solutions, because they've been forced to cut back. Look at your own Peel board. You've pitted the rural areas against the urban areas for busing. You've pitted those parents of children with special needs against the regular classes in terms of transportation. This is a divisiveness that's going on because of the cuts that you talk about.

The legislation includes amendments to the Education Act which enable you to make cuts. There is nothing positive. There is nothing creative. There is nothing supportive. Your interpretation of what you hear, I would suggest, is selective hearing at best. "Classroom funding should be protected"—what a joke. Speak to the children and look at the school boards that have to drop junior kindergarten at this particular stage.

You talk about the local option. You talk about opportunities locally. Local option means no option for some school boards.

"Local taxes should not"—you did not say "will not"; you said "should not"—be increased. They will be increased in certain areas. What you've just done and sent out to the boards, and I have a copy of this with me today, are the 1996 provincial increases in the mill rate. Why is that? So that more money can be grabbed from the local tax base in order to fund the money that the minister is looking to take out of the system totally. That money is going out of the system totally.

I'd like to pass on to my colleague the member for Oakwood an example of some of the cuts. But isn't it surprising how the pattern of create a crisis, bankrupt the system, find a scapegoat and privatize continues to always emerge?

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): It's hypocritical for the minister to say that this is not going to cut classroom. Tomorrow, 428 educational workers in Metro are going to get their pink slips from this minister: 108 elementary teachers, 41 secondary teachers. Fifty-three elementary teachers are going to have a pink slip as a result of the

elimination of industrial arts, family studies and instrumental music. There are going to be 104 instructors in international languages who are going to get their pink slips because of your cuts. Also, there are going to be 47 adult education teachers who are going to get their pink slips tomorrow. And you have the gall to say this doesn't affect students, it doesn't affect education?

Minister, go into a classroom for one day, spend one day in a classroom and come back and tell us if your cuts are not affecting teachers in this province. I challenge you to go to that classroom anywhere in Ontario for one day, Mr Snobelen.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): In response to the Minister of Education and Training's statement on the legislation he's introducing today, I think there are a couple of significant things masked in the edubaffle that he has engaged in. I wonder if there is anyone who really understands in this House what the statement means, "to promote equitable impacts throughout the system by enabling negative grant boards to contribute their share of the savings." What it really means is that the Toronto Board of Education and the Ottawa Board of Education, the ratepayers in those jurisdictions are going to pay property taxes which will then be transferred to the treasury of this province. That's what it means.

The minister goes on to try to maintain the myth that he is not adversely affecting classroom education with his \$400-million demand in cuts for school boards to implement this year, which works out to \$1 billion annualized. He ignores the fact, in saying that he is giving local options to boards on things like junior kindergarten and adult education funding issues, that by cutting the \$400 million and telling them that they have a local option, what he is really saying to them is, "This is where you've got to find your saving."

This means that the York separate board will probably decide not to have junior kindergarten any more. We're not just talking about boards that hadn't had it before, the small 20% that hadn't established junior kindergarten programs; we're moving backwards, thanks to this government and this minister. He can't pretend that junior kindergarten does not take place within the walls of a classroom. This is classroom education, and you're tearing it apart.

The minister ignores the fact that we are seeing enormous numbers of layoffs being announced by boards, thanks to his demands for cuts. This is the first time we've seen a situation where we've had thousands of lay-off notices being given to teachers and other support staff across the province by boards as a direct result of a decision by a government to cut, and yet he still tries to maintain he's not adversely affecting classroom education.

The Peel Board of Education has issued 519 layoff notices. A number of other boards, five boards together, over 4,500 layoff notices. East Parry Sound Board of Education has given layoff notices to one third of its staff—one third.

The minister likes to pretend that somehow laying off teachers is not going to hurt classroom education. He can't play it that way. It doesn't work.

It's interesting that for the first time you have a government here that is trying to argue that they aren't hurting classroom education when they are determined not just to take the money out that the minister has announced but actually double that if they can do it, and he's quite happy about the fact that the annualized figure is much higher than the \$400 million. On top of that, he now is bringing in legislation that will actually legislate contributions from boards that aren't dependent on its grants, to claw back moneys for the provincial treasury; not a negotiated agreement with the boards, but a legislative tool that is going to be used by this government to not only hurt classroom education but actually get a share of the property tax by legislation.

The minister also tries to maintain the myth that this jurisdiction spends far more than other jurisdictions in Canada for education on a per capita basis. In fact, the minister had to agree in estimates debate that the figures he was using were incorrect and that the province of Ontario's expenditures are very much in line with its neighbours. We're about the same as Quebec and Manitoba. We're in the middle of the pack when compared to the rest of the jurisdictions in Canada.

Why is the government taking this approach? Why will he not live up to the commitment they made that they would not hurt classroom education? It's very simple. Because they want to give a tax cut to their friends, and that's the only reason. They say they're protecting children in the future, but what they're doing is they're hurting children today.

1400

COMMUNITY-BASED CARE

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I rise on a point of order, Mr Speaker: The Minister of Health earlier today issued a press release announcing a reinvestment in community-based care, an announcement that quite frankly we welcome. We assume that the Minister of Health, since he's in his place today, will be making an announcement during ministerial statements, because when he was in opposition he was very critical and claimed that we were showing contempt for the House when we made statements outside the House. We just assumed that he didn't have a double standard, one for when he was in opposition and one for when he's in government.

What I ask you to think about, Mr Speaker, is whether or not it's appropriate for the Minister of Health to make an important public policy statement outside the assembly and show his utter contempt for those of us in this assembly.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Same point of privilege?

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): Actually, Mr Speaker, on a point of order: I'd like to ask for unanimous consent so that we can have an opportunity, myself as health critic and the health critic for the third party, to be able to respond to this significant statement.

Interjections: Agreed.

The Speaker: Agreed? I hear a no.

Interjections.

The Speaker: You asked for unanimous consent. Do you have unanimous consent?

Mrs Caplan: Why does the health minister not want us to talk about his statement? What does he have to hide on this when it's supposed to be good news?

The Speaker: The member asked for unanimous consent. Do we have unanimous consent?

Interjections.

Mrs Caplan: Why won't they permit us to respond to the statement that the Minister of Health made? That's a reasonable request.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. Nothing out of order.

THOMAS STELLING

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): I would ask the indulgence of the members as I make some remarks today about the retirement of one of the officers of the House.

As you all know, Thomas Stelling is retiring. Thomas has held this job, one of the oldest in Parliament's history, for almost 20 years, starting with the 30th Parliament in 1976. Thomas has served as Sergeant at Arms to this his 36th Parliament.

Thomas has a love of tradition and respects the dignity of Parliament. When he is called upon to do his job in the chamber, Thomas approaches members and staff alike quietly and discreetly, ensuring appropriate chamber decorum. Whenever the need has arisen to escort a member from the chamber, the Sergeant at Arms has done so with tact and respect, never once drawing his sword. He has never allowed anyone to try to touch the mace, even in jest, although on occasion members have been known to try to hide his tricorn hat.

Always professional, Thomas has maintained his sense of humour during his time as Sergeant at Arms and I'm sure all members of the House join with me in wishing Thomas all the best in his retirement.

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): Mr Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to make a few remarks about Mr Stelling.

The Speaker: Unanimous consent for each member? Agreed.

Hon Mr Eves: Not only has he never drawn his sword, apparently he's getting a little soft in his old age because he doesn't even bother to carry his sword any longer as I notice.

I rise today to pay tribute to Thomas Stelling, who has been a fixture in the Legislative Assembly of Ontario for more than three decades. He began his career in this building in 1964 at the tender age of 17 as a messenger. He has also served as an attendant, then page master, before being appointed to the Sergeant at Arms post in 1976. Notably at the time, he was the youngest Sergeant at Arms in the Commonwealth, quite an achievement for an individual who then was only 30 years of age. It appears that sergeants fare far better than members in this place; the first Sergeant at Arms in Ontario served for 66 years. So I am, quite frankly, surprised at Tom's early retirement.

Few members will witness as many days in this Legislature or experience as many changes to parliamentary procedure as Tom has over his 20 years of distinguished service as Sergeant at Arms. Even the position itself has changed during Thomas's tenure. What at one time was purely a ceremonial role has evolved into an office with significant responsibility for the daily workings of the Legislative precinct.

The technological age has had its influence on Tom's position as well. Thomas proudly boasts of how he has confiscated from this chamber quite a variety and collection of electronic devices: cell phones, pagers and even personal computers.

In the 15 years I have known the Sergeant at Arms, he has maintained a consistent balance of professionalism and good humour, from leading seminars for new members in chamber protocol to directing the officers of the House. Tom has demonstrated a great respect for all things parliamentary. The contribution Thomas Stelling has made, not only to the Ontario Legislature but indeed to the people of Ontario, is one of which he can be very proud and one that has not gone unnoticed on all sides of the House.

I speak for all my colleagues when I say that Thomas's presence here will indeed be missed. Both on a personal level and on behalf of the government caucus, I extend sincere appreciation and congratulations to him on this momentous occasion. To Thomas, his wife, Mary Anne, and their family, very best wishes for good health and much happiness in all their future endeavours.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Mr Speaker, on behalf of the Liberal caucus, I would like to join with you and with the government House leader and the spokesperson for the NDP in paying tribute to Thomas Stelling on his many long years of service to the Legislative Assembly and of course to the people of the province as a whole.

What some of the members who weren't here then do not realize is that when Tom first came to the Legislature and sat in his seat, his hair was jet black. You will notice that today, as a result of the trials and tribulations through which we have put him over the years, he has become more mature in his image. I think that is a nice way of putting it.

Tom is also a good example for all of us, I suppose, and for people throughout our province of an individual who can start at one particular level, a very junior level, and work his way up through the system to one of the highest jobs—I was going to say the highest, but people at the clerks' table were grimacing as I said that—one of the highest positions we could have in the Legislative Assembly in terms of the officers of the Assembly.

Tom we have always known as an extremely friendly individual. We think of the title Sergeant at Arms as a person who is to be stern, a person who is to be disciplined and rigid—words of that nature. Tom, of course, is a very pleasant individual who, when he is escorting members from the assembly when called upon to do so by the Speaker, does so with a smile on his face and, as the Speaker has suitably noted, with a kind of dignity of which we are all proud.

He has never shown favouritism as an officer of the assembly. It is important that individuals who are at the table and those who are serving us in the capacity of Sergeant at Arms show no favouritism. Thomas Stelling has shown no favouritism over the years, but has shown friendliness to all of us in this particular capacity, even when people have, I'm told, taken the opportunity to hide his three-cornered hat in various places and endeavoured to touch the mace, which is the ultimate of the sins that those of us in the assembly can commit. Tom has, again with grace and good humour, responded to that in appropriate fashion.

Beginning at the age of 17 is indeed an early age. He has set some records, as the Speaker and the House leader of the government have pointed out appropriately, not only in Canada and of course in Ontario but throughout the Commonwealth. Tom all of us know, and you have a former Speaker of the assembly here and former members of the assembly in the gallery who will be joining you later at a reception in your honour. All of them remember you fondly, as we all will.

I happen to know, and this is perhaps a secret which I should not let out, that you and those close to you enjoy Niagara wine very much. We know the reason you may need some of that Niagara wine at the end of the day, but we hope you can enjoy your retirement and enjoy those trips to the Niagara Peninsula, to the various wineries and the other pursuits that I know you will enjoy.

You will remember us well, I'm sure, and fondly. We remember you fondly. The place will be somewhat different without you and your smiling face looking at us.

1410

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I want to join my colleagues on all sides of the House in wishing Tom well in the future. Over the years I've known Tom Stelling, I've had the opportunity to have sort of a happy, friendly banter going on with him from time to time, usually about his attire. I've always suggested that it would be far more relaxing for everyone if he could just come in a business suit, but he always pointed out to me that his predecessor used to wear a kilt, so in actual fact he's been dressing down all these years.

It's been mentioned that of course he walks with a sword—I don't know how he's going to balance now that he doesn't have that on his side—and that he should not ever draw the sword. There's a superstition, I understand, that if you do take the sword out of the scabbard it has to draw blood. I know he came close to doing that once with the former member for Sudbury East, when he had to try to persuade him to leave one very late evening after a very raucous debate in the Legislature.

He also had the opportunity once to escort me from the House, on one occasion when I think it was Vince Kerrio, the member for Niagara Falls, who was the Minister of Natural Resources and at that time I accused him of lying—asleep at night.

It has also been mentioned that one of his major roles, of course, is to carry the mace and to ensure that the mace is placed in the proper place, is not touched and is not in any way harmed, because it's a symbol of the

freedom of this place. I do remember one occasion, though, where I think a deranged young man charged on to the floor of the House and tried to grab the mace, and Tom was very quick to jump up and run after him and was helped by the security people in this place. I should point out to members who may not know that this deranged young man was not a member of the House.

It's also been talked about his hat. I've always been very concerned about this, because on one occasion many years ago Tom told me that he had been informed that wearing that kind of hat on a regular basis actually causes cancer. I hope the grey hair is not an indication of some kind of radiation treatment that you've had to take.

Tom, on a serious note, has been very fair to all of us in the House, no matter what side of the House we were on, has been very helpful to individual members and has carried out his duties in a very responsible and friendly manner to all members of the House over the years.

I've come to know Tom and to appreciate him as a very conscientious member of the staff of this place and someone who really cares about this place. He is responsible for decorum, of course, to enforce the rulings of the Speaker, and I would say that I am concerned that the decorum of the place, the atmosphere of this place has changed over the years. I think if Tom were to express his own opinion even privately, he might concur with that. The atmosphere of this assembly is not what I think it could be, should be or has been in times past, and I'm not casting any blame on anyone there for that.

Having said that, all of us join together in this House in wishing Tom and his family well in his retirement. We look forward to hearing from you from time to time and knowing that you will be caring about this place and what is happening here in your retirement. So all the best on behalf of all of us.

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): If I'm permitted, Mr Speaker, just a quick note and also good wishes to Tom Stelling, whom I have come to know over 11 years and respect him tremendously. I know too that the test of time and the test of a job at times are very challenging to the Sergeant at Arms. I have never been ejected from the House except for that one encounter, and I have come to know Tom Stelling even better for the 18 hours that we spent together very intimately, professionally. I just want to say the mannerism of this gentleman is something that we all can exemplify as an individual and a good person to work with.

We will miss you. We will miss you very much. I knew this man was a good man because he enjoyed a good Jamaican cigar from time to time and oftentimes when I speak to him his eyes are lit up whenever I'm travelling and able to bring back a cigar for him.

I'm going to miss Tom Stelling very much. His professionalism is something that I admire and I hope many of us and those who watch you across the province will realize the kind of individual you are.

I want to wish you the best in your next adventures of professional life.

The Speaker: I want to thank all members for their kind and well-deserved remarks.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): I have one other member in the east gallery I'd like to introduce. It's Jack Johnson, and his wife Marie. I believe the riding was Wellington-Dufferin-Peel. Welcome to the House.

ORAL QUESTIONS

WATER QUALITY

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): My first question is for the Premier. Premier, I'm sure that thousands of Ontarians were as shocked as I was today to learn that as many as 40 Ontario communities lack the proper filtration equipment necessary to stop the potentially deadly parasite that has contaminated Collingwood's water supply. I wonder if you would tell us today whether or not your government has taken action to inform the residents of those 40 communities that they are potentially at risk, and if that has not taken place, will you undertake to do so immediately.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): The two ministers who would be involved I guess are the Minister of Environment and Energy and the Minister of Health. The Minister of Environment's not here today. I think the Minister of Health is prepared to respond.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): On behalf of the government, particularly with the Collingwood situation, which is an area of the province, as members know, that I represent, we've made a commitment on behalf of the government that public safety is paramount in all of these cases. I signed an order just two days ago to ensure that cryptosporidium, the parasite itself, and the disease it causes is now a reportable disease, along the same line as sexually transmitted diseases and other diseases. That should ensure that in the future, when the first sign of an outbreak of this parasite occurs, the public health authorities are immediately notified as per the new law.

I think that's some help. Unfortunately, no one thought to do that until the outbreak in Collingwood. I would like to stress we have not found the parasite in any of the many water samples that have been done, so at this point it is suspected that that parasite got into the water supply, but it is not confirmed at this point.

Mrs McLeod: This is a serious issue, and it's a serious issue not only for the people of Collingwood who have been infected with the parasite, it is now a serious issue for people in at least 39 other communities who don't know whether they're at risk. That's the focus of my question, I say to the Premier and to the minister, and I ask in the interests of the health of those people, Minister, that you address my question very directly.

It's a Ministry of Environment spokesman who has said that there are 40 other communities that do not have the filtration equipment necessary to protect the residents against this parasite. Clearly, the Ministry of Environment must know where those communities are, which ones are at risk in order to be able to make that kind of a statement.

We know how serious the problem in Collingwood is, with 100 people sick, with about 20% of the town's

population infected, and I say to you in all seriousness it's not enough to stand up today and tell us that you have now acted to make it a reportable disease. We're concerned to make sure that no other community is going to have to learn after the fact that their drinking water is not safe.

1420

I remind you of the last time there were some questions about the safety of Ontario's drinking water and the now Premier, then leader of the opposition said, "They're entitled to know." Minister, I believe Mike Harris was right in that; people do have a right to know. You have a responsibility and your government has a responsibility to ensure the safety of people in those communities. Will you do so today?

Hon Mr Wilson: The Collingwood case illustrates how difficult it is to find out the cause in about a dozen people who are confirmed sick at this time, therefore we wouldn't want to unnecessarily alarm 40 other communities. You will also note from the engineering reports that filtration does not necessarily screen out this particular parasite.

This government would fully agree, in the name of public safety, that people have a right to know when we have something to tell them. We're going to have to wait until there's a report from the local health officials tomorrow. We'll have a better understanding, probably, at this time tomorrow, as to what actions the government will be called upon, in the name of public safety for the people of Collingwood and for other communities—certainly, the advice we expect to receive from our medical officers of health tomorrow will help to guide the government and the Minister of Environment as to what might have to be done for the other 39 communities in the province.

Mrs McLeod: It's important that I understand exactly what commitment the minister has just made because I think it is important to the people in those communities and because I want to serve as a vehicle for asking for reassurance, not to be alarmist.

As I understand it, the minister has said they are going to be meeting, that they are going to make a decision about not only how to advise people in those 39 communities—I assume it's 39 and that Collingwood is one of the 40—that they are going to make a decision as to how to advise them that they are potentially at risk, and furthermore, what advice to give them to deal with a potential problem in the short term. I'm rephrasing because I want to be sure of the commitment. I think this is a reasonable commitment to ask of you.

We know that some short-term solutions have been provided or are being worked on for the people of Collingwood, including boiling their water. I think it is reasonable to suggest that is a short-term solution and that the government is also obligated to look at ways of making sure that people in Ontario don't have to boil their water to make sure it's safe.

I'm asking not just with concern for the safety of the people in Collingwood, but for all the communities that are potentially affected by this. Will you give us your assurance that those people will be advised that they are in communities potentially at risk? Will you give us an

assurance that they will be given advice immediately as to how to deal with the problem in the short term, and will you further give us an assurance that your government—you, the Premier and the Minister of Environment—are taking immediate action to look at what long-term solutions you have for those 40 communities where your own officials say the residents could be at risk? Give us an assurance, Minister, and I ask this in all seriousness, that the safety of Ontario citizens and their health will not be at risk because there are not dollars being made available for the filtration that is needed.

Hon Mr Wilson: I very much appreciate the honourable member's question. The importance of making cryptosporidium a reportable disease, a reportable parasite, is that operating at arm's length from the ministry are our medical officers of health. If there is any risk in other communities, they are required under the law now to notify those communities, as would be done with any outbreak of any public health disease. They operate at arm's length from the politicians and from the government of the day and they would do that regardless of whether your party was in office or our party was in office.

They met yesterday. They were fully instructed by the chief medical officer of health how to handle this situation. I can give you the assurance on their behalf that they will do their jobs, and if we find in the report tomorrow that there is potential risk for other communities, people will be notified. Public safety is paramount and the government will take whatever action is required to protect the safety of the public.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): New question.

Mrs McLeod: I had intended to move to another issue today but I'm a little bit concerned about—

The Speaker: Who's your question to?

Mrs McLeod: —the answer that the Minister of Health has just given and I'm going to direct my second question to him. I think, Minister, what I was asking for was reasonable, and again I've tried to do it in a way which is reassuring and not alarmist.

The Ministry of Environment and Energy spokesman has said that there are 40 communities that do not have the water filtration plants that are necessary to protect the drinking water of those residents and ensure that they are not at risk from the parasite which has infested the people in Collingwood. That's a statement of fact made by a government spokesman, Minister.

I appreciate the fact that the Minister of Environment is not here today to be able to respond directly on behalf of her ministry, but surely this is an issue of enough concern to the members of the government that you have all given some thought to how to deal with what is clearly going to be a source of alarm for residents in all communities of Ontario which may be one of the 40 communities that do not have adequate water filtration systems.

I suggest to you today that the greatest alarm of all is going to be caused when people understand that their water supply could be infected. You will have every resident of Ontario boiling their water if you are not prepared to acknowledge openly what communities are affected and to provide the advice immediately to people.

Minister, tell me, why would you hesitate for one moment to give us the assurance that by tomorrow you will have not only the names of the communities made public, because you have that information now, but that the only reason for delay is because you want to add to that the advice for short-term solutions?

Hon Mr Wilson: I'm a little perplexed by the question. I've given the assurance, in the name of public safety, that this government will do everything that's required. Let's be very clear, though, because Collingwood is very sensitive about this issue. It's a four-season tourist destination. We have no scientific evidence, in spite of constant testing by the local medical officer of health and the local Ministry of Environment and Energy officials, no conclusive evidence that this parasite is in the water supply, that that's the cause of the dozen or so people's illness in the community. It's not backed up by any scientific evidence, and we're waiting for that. They've done over 20 tests in Collingwood and they've never found the parasite. Those tests were sent to independent labs.

I know from talking to the mayor yesterday and each day that he would not want anyone in this House to unnecessarily scare the people of Collingwood or other communities. We're waiting for the scientific guidance from the health officials and we'll take whatever advice they recommend, but it's a little early to jump to all the conclusions that either the media have jumped to or that you're jumping to in your question.

Mrs McLeod: With all due respect, this is not a question about how we ensure that tourists will not be deterred from coming to Ontario. This is a question about how we provide Ontario residents with an assurance that their drinking water is safe or, if in fact there is any question about the safety of their drinking water, that they are given the knowledge necessary to protect themselves before there can be some long-term solutions to the problem.

Minister, all you have said to me today is that your ministry will take responsible action to deal with any outbreaks of the parasite and then we'll look at the scientific understanding of whether or not the parasite is the cause of the problem. That's not good enough. You have a Ministry of Environment spokesperson saying 40 communities are potentially at risk from a parasite which is already causing illness in Collingwood. We surely don't have to wait until people get sick before information that could help to protect the public is made public.

Minister, tell me, why would you withhold knowledge, the simple knowledge of which communities are affected, when that knowledge could at least allow the residents of the communities to take action to protect their own health?

Hon Mr Wilson: We're not withholding anything. I'm telling everybody exactly what's happening, and that is, we're waiting for some evidence. I don't have the answer to what are the 40 communities that don't have filtration systems right now. That would be a matter of public record, and I'm sure the Minister of Environment and Energy, if she were here, would be able to provide you with that information.

I would remind all members of the Legislature of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, which says, "Despite any other provision of this act, a head shall, as soon as practicable, disclose any record to the public or persons affected if the head has reasonable and probable grounds to believe that it is in the public interest to do so and that the record reveals a grave environmental, health or safety hazard to the public."

1430

Not only do our medical officers of health have an obligation, at arm's length from government, to inform the public and a group of people who may be at risk, but also the government and all members here are bound by the privacy and information act to ensure that if we have any records, we will disclose those to those communities that may be at risk. But I'm trying to tell you that we don't have those records right now, in terms of exactly what happened in Collingwood and what the solutions are. As soon as we have that, it will all be very, very public.

The Speaker: Final supplementary.

Mrs McLeod: It's question number 6 on this same issue. When this happened to Collingwood, all of us were concerned about what happened to the people in Collingwood. I'm sure there was not a person in Ontario who didn't say: "I wonder if the same thing could happen to our drinking water. I wonder if the drinking water in my community is safe."

Today, we have the Ministry of Environment spokesperson, a spokesperson for the ministry and the government responsible for ensuring the environmental safety and therefore the safety of drinking water in this province, saying indeed there are 40 communities which are potentially at risk. This isn't something we've pulled out of the sky.

There is a need to provide some information, if not reassurance. It's a question of withholding records. Minister, the Ministry of Environment must have the record. If they don't have the record of the communities that don't have the water filtration equipment, they wouldn't have made the statements they did today. So you must know who's affected, you must be deciding what you're going to do.

Since we cannot get a commitment from you today, Minister, I have to wonder what it is you're talking about in the back rooms today. I have to wonder whether you're really worried about providing advice and taking action to protect the health of these citizens. I honestly don't know why you find this a laughing matter at this point, as the Minister of Health. I have to wonder if you are more concerned about protecting your tax cut from the kind of expenditures you are going to be facing if you acknowledge that there are 40 communities that need some capital money to be able to provide safe drinking water for their residents. I say this should be about the health of Ontario residents and not about protecting your budget line from unexpected expenditures.

Minister, if you're not prepared to take action, at least make a commitment that you will give the Ontario public the information they need so they can take steps to protect themselves.

Hon Mr Wilson: The honourable member is correct. Perhaps I could be clearer: I'm telling you today that I

don't have the list of the communities that don't have filters on their water plants; however, those municipalities know whether they have filters on their plants, the local medical officers of health know whether they have filters. We will provide you with the list just as soon as I have it. We've asked for it, but we don't have it. As soon as it's available, we'll provide it.

There really isn't much more to this. Tomorrow at this time, I hope we have a more conclusive report from the Collingwood situation. The government's eager to act on behalf of the public interest and to protect public safety, and that is our firm commitment.

COMMENTS OF SOLICITOR GENERAL

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is to the Premier. While you've been out of the House holding secret meetings with the Prime Minister, the Deputy Premier, the Attorney General and the Solicitor General himself have been unsuccessfully trying to defend the inappropriate comments your Solicitor General has made.

On Monday in the House, when I questioned you about this matter, you stated in your response, "I'm not familiar with what the Solicitor General has said or not said," and you seemed equally unaware of the process of the police complaints commission.

It's important for us all to recognize that the police complaints commission is investigating any complaints that arose out of the issue that happened here on March 18, and that it will report to the commissioner of the OPP, who reports directly to the Solicitor General.

Let me also make it clear to you, Mr Premier, that we are not demanding the Solicitor General's resignation because of what happened on March 18, although as is any minister in your government or any other government, he is obviously ultimately responsible for whatever happens by those who are accountable to him while he is minister.

Let me just be very clear. What we are talking about is that the Solicitor General knew there were complaints pending in front of the police complaints commission. He knew those complaints were there. He didn't know what they were, and we accept that he didn't know what they were. Despite that, he has said publicly to the press that he first of all met with senior OPP officials, knowing that there was a complaint; he viewed confidential OPP videotapes; he commented on what he saw in those tapes; he concluded that the police gave the picketers fair warning. He blamed not OPSEU but other organizations such as the Coalition against Poverty for what happened here on March 18.

Mr Premier, do you not agree that the Solicitor General's comments could prejudice the investigation of the police complaints commission, and is it inappropriate for the Solicitor General to view and comment on confidential OPP videotapes that may be the subject of complaints and investigations before the police complaints commission?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): No, I do not agree with the premise put forward by the member, nor do I agree with the preamble that indicated this hasn't been

satisfactorily answered by the Solicitor General, the Attorney General and the House leader for our party.

Mrs Boyd: Mr Premier, the Solicitor General's comments were clearly inappropriate and may prejudice the complaints that come before the police complaints commission. They may call into disrepute the administration of justice in this province.

You, as Premier, must show some leadership and take some responsibility as the head of the government. It's extremely important that when we set up procedures that ensure due process is followed, that a politician is not able to interfere in any way, especially a Solicitor General, who is the chief police officer in the province. An inference can constitute a discussion of evidence, a discussion of possibilities in such cases. It is important for all of us to understand that the findings of a judge or anyone acting as a judge in a tribunal ought not to be subject to comments made by elected people, because that could infer political interference.

While in opposition you said: "There are guidelines governing conflict and there is the rule of law. Then there are codes of conduct of which we are talking about in these cases—the rule of law and the codes of conduct, not conflict for personal gain." That was in Hansard on June 17, 1991. As recently as yesterday, going into the cabinet, you told the press, "They all have to answer to me on their conduct and on their behaviour every day."

I would suggest to you, Mr Premier, that the only way to restore faith in the administration of justice in this province, and indeed in your ability to protect the administration of justice in this province, is to request the resignation of your Solicitor General. Will you do so?

Hon Mr Harris: The short answer is no, because I've heard nothing that indicates it is warranted.

I want to go back to the first part of the question, which was all premised on the police complaints commission and where it reports. My information is that part VI of the Police Services Act, which deals with the police complaints commission—number one, it is independent and it reports to the Attorney General.

Mrs Boyd: Our information from the police complaints commission itself is that when it has investigated this, it will report it back to the commissioner of the OPP, who is responsible for determining what punishment, if any, will be levied against anyone against whom complaints have been levied within the OPP, up to and including criminal charges. If we're wrong about that, we are certainly willing to stand corrected. We don't believe that's wrong; we have that information directly from the police complaints commission. It is different with the OPP than it is for municipal police forces.

1440

I would suggest to you that your Solicitor General has crossed the line. These actions are inappropriate for a chief law officer in the province. In a legislative report looking into the conduct of a minister—and this was in August 1994, page 115, the Legislative Assembly committee—it clearly states:

"Ministers always wear the cloak of ministerial responsibility. There is no way that their actions, whether verbal or written, and whether in the member's position as an elected member of the Legislature or as a minister, can be

considered by the recipient as other than actions by a minister, and thus could reasonably be considered as attempting to influence a decision...."

That comes from the conflict commissioner's report of 1993-94. It was quoted in that legislative committee.

It's very clear, as it was yesterday, as it has been all week, that this government has different standards for itself and different standards for anyone else who has ever formed a government in this province. I reiterate that since the Solicitor General's comments may have prejudiced the investigations before the police complaints commission, you have no other choice but to request that he resign, and you must do so quickly if you're going to uphold the integrity of the administration of justice in this province. Will you do so?

Hon Mr Harris: The minister has explained his remarks. The police complaints commission is independent, not associated with the Solicitor General. The House leader has called for a full public inquiry. With the greatest of respect I think you are almost alone, maybe with a few of your party members, in the view that you have.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): My question is also to the Premier and it's on the same issue. Premier, we want you to understand that the reason we are pursuing this important point is because we believe and we think it's becoming clearer and clearer, it seems, to everyone but the members of your government and yourself as Premier that your Solicitor General has shown contempt for the administration of justice, the same administration of justice that he is sworn to uphold. He has shown disrespect for crown law officials, he has shown disrespect for the former Attorney General, he has shown disrespect for Justice Galligan and he has shown disrespect for the judgement of your own Attorney General.

Under the controversy that surrounded this whole issue, he tried to take a cheap political shot and instead ended up shooting himself in the foot. Later, he apologized for that statement, but in making that statement he showed his real temperament and he showed that he is unable to carry out his duties understanding the responsibilities that he has. His contempt for the administration of justice in this province is clearly proof that he should not continue in this position.

You, Premier, have prided yourself in saying that you are a different kind of politician. The integrity of your ministers has got to be at the core of that. So I want to ask you, Premier, why is it that you have not asked for the resignation of the Solicitor General?

Hon Mr Harris: I think you've had the answer from the Attorney General, the Solicitor General, the House leader and from me on many occasions. I really actually want to review Hansard to review all the things you've said. We are a different kind of politician than you.

Mr Silipo: It's becoming clear that people are understanding more and more what Mike Harris meant when he said he was going to be a different kind of politician. It certainly had nothing to do with bringing greater integrity to this place.

The fact is that on Tuesday, March 19, in Hansard—and read this, please, when you review Hansard—the Solicitor General said, "At the police complaints commission, there are already, I understand, two complaints that

are possibly filed; at least they've been filed with the police service and may be formally filed with the police complaints commission, and perhaps others will follow."

Knowing that these complaints had been filed, on Wednesday morning the Solicitor General then went on to say, referring to the picketers: "I think they were given fair warning. I think the tape indicates that they were given fair warning and that the picket lines broke down."

Premier, it's clear that his comments could prejudice the process on the very complaints that are being looked into. Your Solicitor General has indicated, from the confidential videotapes that he viewed, that the picketers had fair warning. Yet complaints that could be dealing with these very same issues are currently before the police complaints commission. I know you said earlier, Premier, that you believe the commission is independent, but surely you would not accept a statement from any minister with respect to a case that was before the courts, even though the judiciary is independent of the Attorney General, for example. So why is it that in this case you are accepting the behaviour of the Solicitor General when he has clearly interfered in a process of a quasi-judicial body that is investigating the very same complaints that he is commenting on? Why is it, Premier?

Hon Mr Harris: I think you have heard the opinion of the Attorney General and the House leader that any remarks that were made were not about any individual case. There is nothing I have seen or heard that indicates that there has been any prejudicial action, either for the police complaints commission or for the full public inquiry, which I believe will get to the bottom of all this.

Mr Silipo: Premier, I suggest you go back and take another look at this and think about it a bit more, because you cannot on the one hand simply sluff this off to the inquiry; this has got nothing to do with the inquiry. Secondly, Premier, I say to you, you cannot now put yourself in the position of being judge and jury and saying that the comments of the Solicitor General had nothing to do with the complaints; we don't know that, you don't know that, the Solicitor General doesn't know that. It's exactly the point as to why it is that ministers, particularly in this case the Solicitor General, should not be commenting on complaints or possible complaints that are going before the police complaints commission.

Premier, I say to you that, as head of the government, you have the ultimate responsibility in this matter. Again, I want to say to you that just as recently as yesterday, to quote back your own words, you said, referring to ministers: "They all have to answer to me on their conduct and their behaviour every day. I'm ultimately responsible for who's in a position of responsibility, and every minute of every day people have to be accountable."

Premier, is this the way in which you hold your ministers accountable, by accepting interference by ministers in complaints that are before quasi-judicial bodies? Is this the standard of conduct you are setting for your ministers in this government? Is this the integrity you talked about? Why have you not asked the Solicitor General to step aside until this matter is cleared up?

Hon Mr Harris: Because, other than the former Attorney General in your party and a few leadership candidates, nobody believes what you're saying has any bearing on the case.

INTERPROVINCIAL TRADE

Mr Bernard Grandmaître (Ottawa East): My question is to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. Mr Minister, you will recall that in the spring of 1993 I introduced a resolution in this House asking the former government, the NDP government, to eliminate the trade barriers between the provinces of Ontario and Quebec. This resolution was endorsed unanimously by this House, 56 ayes and no nays. Finally, on December 24 of that year, 1993, the Ontario-Quebec agreement on public procurement and construction labour mobility was signed.

With the arrival of the PQ government, the rules were changed and Ontarians were again being cheated of having the right to work in the province of Quebec. Your government is supposed to be out there creating jobs. Your commitment was to create 725,000 jobs. Well, I'm trying to help your cause. I'm asking you, Mr Minister, what have you done lately to permit Ontarians to work in the province of Quebec? What has been your program? Have you met with the minister from Quebec? Have you promoted reciprocal services? What have you done lately?

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): To the member for Ottawa East, I'd like to respond that there have been two meetings which I have attended of interprovincial trade ministers; one was last November and one was about three weeks ago. In the course of our meetings, I had the opportunity to speak with the interprovincial trade minister from Quebec, and I have made it quite clear that we in Ontario want our citizens in eastern Ontario to have access to work in Quebec just as Quebec workers have access to work in Ontario. I made it very clear, and I think my message is no more than that.

1450

Mr Grandmaître: Maybe I'll try my luck in French, Mr Speaker, because I couldn't get an answer from this minister. We have 4,000 Quebecers crossing our Ontario bridges and working in the Ottawa-Carleton area on our construction sites every day, and it's happening in North Bay, it's happening all over the province of Ontario wherever there's an Ontario-Quebec border.

Mr Minister, I ask you, what have you done? I'm not asking you if you had meetings. What are the actions and when will you act to promote Ontarians working in Ontario?

Hon Mr Saunderson: To the member for Ottawa East, I would just like to say that, as you know, there is an agreement, and we're making sure that is adhered to. I'd mentioned earlier that we've had negotiations and talks, and as far as I'm concerned, we are being very well treated.

COMMENTS OF SOLICITOR GENERAL

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): My question is to the Solicitor General. Mr Solicitor General, in spite of all the questions that have been asked this week of you around this issue, even yesterday you continued to comment on the conclusions you have drawn from viewing confidential OPP tapes. In the scrum on your way into

the cabinet room a week after your previous remarks that we've talked about a lot, you made comments, "I think I talked about warnings, but in terms of the incidents, the actions of the police and picketers," and yesterday after question period in the scrum you said, "I said the particular tapes that I watched, obviously there was warning given."

You're continuing to comment on this. Even though your behaviour has been called into question, you're continuing to find it impossible to keep your personal opinion out of the issue of an investigation that is before the police complaints commission.

You're the top police officer in the province and you've publicly voiced your conclusions about what happened on March 18, not only about the behaviour of the police but also about the behaviour of the picketers. You could very well have prejudiced due process in our justice system. When are you going to learn to hold your tongue? How much more damage are you going to do to the integrity of the administration of justice in the province? To restore integrity, you must do the honourable thing and step aside.

Hon Bob Runciman (Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services): I have full confidence in the independence of the police complaints commission, and I stand by what I've said in response to earlier questions.

Mrs Boyd: The Solicitor General can't have publicly personal views on matters that are questions before the judicial committee. We've talked about what the conflict commissioner said, that ministers always wear the cloak of ministerial responsibility, and every time you speak, you seem to think that you can divide yourself from your role as minister. You cannot. How can the public continue to have confidence in your ability to act in an impartial, fairminded and rational manner?

You have only one choice, Minister, to clear the air around this controversy and your integrity: Submit your resignation and step aside now.

Hon Mr Runciman: I think the public has confidence in the job I'm doing and the job this government is doing. It's just a small group of people across the aisle who have that opinion.

MINISTRY RELOCATION

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): My question today is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, perhaps the best-looking minister in cabinet. I am aware your ministry is currently making preparations to move your main office from Toronto to Guelph. In these times of restraint, could the minister tell this House why such a move is taking place at this time?

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): I think the initial comments from my colleague from Perth come with age and grey hair.

The impact that the consolidation of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs will have in consolidating 10 different locations presently in the city of Guelph and in the city of Toronto into one location will promote more efficient operation, better service to the agrifood industry of the province of Ontario, reduced

administration costs and reduced business travel. That's what this government is oriented towards, reducing the cost of government to the taxpayers, and this is part of that commitment.

Mr Bert Johnson: As a supplementary, I wanted to say that while a great many of the constituents in the riding of Perth continue to express their support for this government's agenda, some have expressed concerns that the move to Guelph could mean a reduction in the status and importance of the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Can the minister please explain what impact this move will have on the future services of the agricultural community of Ontario?

Hon Mr Villeneuve: The consolidation of all administration will create a centre of excellence in the city of Guelph which is well known to all members here because the University of Guelph is indeed a centre of excellence where education, where research and development in the agrifood sector will occur.

I want to remind you and all members in this House that the growth industry is the agrifood industry. The growth industry in this province, where jobs will be created, comes from the agrifood sector and the centre of excellence which will consolidate all of the agrifood sector into the centre of excellence and will serve the province well.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order. The member for Essex South is out of order.

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I have a question for the Minister of Health. As you already know, there are over 11,000 psychiatric outpatients who rely on prescription medication just to remain stable. On June 1, your ministry will impose a \$2 user fee for each prescription. Did you take into account the consequences first? This user fee is expected to cause an incredible amount of human misery and pain. Second, the caregivers, some who are in the public gallery today, testified at an earlier press conference that they are gravely concerned about their own safety since patients without medication become disoriented and unpredictably violent.

I want to ask the minister if he is prepared to sacrifice the safety of the caregivers, doctors, nurses, police, the general public for a fistful of dollars that he is trying to collect from ex-psychiatric patients who just don't have the money to pay?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I appreciate the question of the honourable member and I will remind him that my colleague the Honourable Al Leach, the member for St George-St David, has also been very active in representing his constituents. He has a large population in the south end of his riding where patients take methadone on a daily basis. We don't expect those patients to pay the \$2 fee and we're working on the program. It looks like the program will likely be implemented on July 1, because of the public service strike, and probably not June 1.

I should say that the other nine provinces that have copayments on drugs don't have the flexibility in their

laws that we already have built into the law that was passed by this Legislature, which is to waive the \$2 fee. On Monday of this week, I'll be meeting with five other health ministers to see if they have further advice on how they're going about modifying their programs. The \$2 fee is the lowest in Canada. If you're in Saskatchewan, your fee is \$700 every six months for the drug program.

1500

With the \$2-billion hit we're taking from this member's federal counterparts, the Liberal Party of Canada, we had to introduce a small copayment to keep the Ontario drug benefit plan afloat and to ensure we could continue to add new drugs to the program. Also, most importantly, by having people pay a little bit towards their drugs, we've expanded that program so that 140,000 working poor now qualify for the drug program in this province. We're well aware of the problem the honourable member raises and we're doing everything we can to address it.

Mr Ruprecht: That almost sounded like a commitment, and I would very much encourage him, but let's review the past just briefly. On July 5, 1993—I hope you recall that letter—you as the Tory health critic wrote a letter to Ontario's pharmacists, and I quote, "We, as Progressive Conservatives, cannot endorse legislation that will punish pharmacists, that will punish patients to the detriment of health care in Ontario." Did you write that letter? I hope you remember it.

You are now punishing ex-psychiatric patients with some misconceived notion that you can save big money. When vulnerable patients do not take their medication, you will pay millions and millions more in extra hospital emergency calls, more police calls, more ambulance calls and numerous cries for help. In short, there will be no savings and much more pain and expense.

Minister, I hope that your commitment earlier—at least I thought I heard this commitment—will be ringing throughout Ontario, saying to everyone here today and to those who are here who are the caregivers of Ontario that you will commit the \$2 fee to be struck out simply because of the grave consequences that you as minister will be held responsible for if you continue with this fee.

Hon Mr Wilson: First of all, the quote the honourable member attributes to my comments in 1993 referred to the previous government's Bill 84; it had nothing to do with the topic we are discussing here today. Secondly, I have met regularly with the Ontario Pharmacists' Association and we are working out these concerns. In the announcement made in this House with respect to the program, I fully admitted these concerns. I gave the commitment at that time to work through this problem. That's what we're doing.

We designed the law so that it can be flexible to address this problem, and we've been honest, forthright and working very hard on this very thing since the day we announced it. No one is more aware of the cost to the system, as you mentioned, than the Minister of Health. We can't afford to offload from one side of the system to the other side of the system. We're very much aware of that and I said that when I made the statement in the House announcing the program.

NORTHERN AIR SERVICE

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question to the Premier that I know will be of interest to him, not only as the head of the government, but as a member from northern Ontario. I'd like to review very briefly a chronology for the Premier. On November 30 of last year the Minister of Northern Development and Mines announced that this government was abandoning the norOntair air service for 17 communities in northern Ontario. Then on December 16 the minister said the government would assist remote communities. He was assuring them that they would continue to have air service. On January 15 of this year the minister announced that norOntair service would end tomorrow, as a matter of a fact. Now we have seen three communities left without air service as a result of this announcement: Hornepayne in my riding, Chapleau in Nickel Belt riding and Gore Bay in Algoma-Manitoulin constituency.

On March 27, in the Sudbury Star, an ONTC spokesman announced: "We didn't have time to call tenders. This came in a hurry. The minister said we had to find some way of providing service" to those three communities. Apparently, an agreement was made with Voyageur Airways to provide service to these three communities. Now that deal apparently has been cancelled because the minister has decided he should tender the process.

Premier, can you explain why it is that your government didn't realize right from the beginning that transportation in northern Ontario, the vast geographic area we have, requires government assistance and requires government money? And why on earth did your government not properly tender this service for Hornepayne, Chapleau and Gore Bay rather than having this rather incompetent approach that has created a situation where these communities now won't have air service at least until May?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): The Minister of Northern Development is not here but he has left me a bit of a chronology of events, and I will attempt as best I can to relay the information to the leader of the New Democratic Party.

First of all, the three communities you've mentioned are three that we did ask tenders to provide air service for, along with all the communities. However, there was no way of knowing which communities the private sector would not bid on until the bids came in, so there was a time problem in finding out. Had the private sector been prepared to provide air service to all the communities, including Hornepayne, Chapleau and Gore Bay, obviously there wouldn't have been a problem, at least in providing that air service.

What happened was that the private sector bid—you will correct me if I'm wrong—on 14 of the routes, which confirms that for 14 out of 17 there's really no need for the taxpayers to subsidize service, that the private sector is quite capable of providing it. There were three they did not bid on, so the minister had received assurances from the ONTC, whose responsibility it is—and it was certainly our intention in public statements and comments that we expected air service to be provided to the communities in the north even if it meant some subsidy had to be provided for some of those communities. No subsidy is

required for 14. Clearly, we are going to have to assist, as it is the purpose and the intention of the government to make sure these communities have air service.

Further to that, the minister has indicated that ONTC thought it could do that by entering into an agreement with Voyageur Airways. The problem we had with that is that we found out it was not tendered, that they were invited bids from two companies. That is contrary to government rules and it's contrary as well to the ONTC guidelines, so the minister has asked ONTC, and they've agreed, to come back as quickly as possible to provide service for those communities.

1510

Mr Wildman: Obviously, the note that was left by the minister was somewhat inadequate.

Surely the Premier understands that the reason 14 communities will have private service now is because the private sector believes it could make some money on those. Those routes were in fact subsidizing the three money losers in the past, and because you've given up those routes, now you're going to have to subsidize with taxpayers' money the routes that are not left with any service. Also, you didn't respond to the fact that the Ontario Northland Transportation Commission said that the reason for the lack of tenders with Voyageur was because the minister was in such a hurry.

What assurance do we have that these three communities will get service in May and that it will last beyond four months, which is apparently what the tender is for? Also, what assurance do we have that if the private sector decides it cannot make money on some of the other routes, whether it be Elliot Lake or Wawa or others, and withdraws from those routes, the provincial government—the provincial taxpayers, I guess—will then provide subsidies for those routes so that the air service can be continued?

Hon Mr Harris: The ONTC indicated—and I think this information was relayed to the member for Sudbury East, who had inquired about it. The member is saying that the minister asked the ONTC, "As quickly as possible, make sure that air service is not prevented from being provided to Hornepayne, Chapleau and Gore Bay." If you're opposed to the government and the Minister of Northern Development wanting service to Hornepayne, Chapleau and Gore Bay, then say so. I think the minister was quite correct in saying, "Do what you have to do to make sure that air service is provided to those communities in northern Ontario."

You had a solution which cost millions and millions of dollars; we have a solution that will cost potentially a few hundred thousand dollars. Either way, the communities will be served. If you are standing here today and saying the Minister of Northern Development was wrong to ask for service as quickly as possible, then I'd like you to go back and explain that to the communities in northern Ontario.

WORKFARE

Ms Isabel Bassett (St Andrew-St Patrick): I have a question for my colleague the Minister of Community and Social Services. I've been receiving an increasing

number of inquiries from constituents in my riding of St Andrew-St Patrick about the new Ontario Works program; how they can get involved so that they can get back into the workforce. Can you give me some advice about what to tell them? How soon this will be happening?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Community and Social Services): If I might be permitted, first of all I'd like to put a little bit of perspective in terms of this particular program and the background prior to getting to the specific question.

First of all, the former Premier of the province, Mr Rae, said of course it's not smart to pay people to stay at home. We agree with that and that's really what our program is all about. The reason we have to embark upon this particular program—and I'd like to use the last 10 years as a benchmark, since that's the last time a responsible government was in power. In 1985, there were only 476,000 people on welfare, which ballooned over the last 10 years to close to 1.3 million people. In addition to that, the costs of this program have ballooned from close to \$1.5 billion to close to \$7 billion. This necessitates fundamental change.

I'd like to just quote quickly from Mr Silipo back on March 13, 1994, when he said: "The welfare system in Ontario simply doesn't work any more. It is an expensive, inefficient system that hasn't kept pace with the changing needs of the people of Ontario. Taxpayers demand and deserve a more sound and accountable system."

We are not going to tinker with this system, that's why we're doing fundamental change. We are right now in the middle of completing the consultation process. Through the MPPs, I encourage the community organizations to come forward with their local solutions.

Ms Bassett: I want to add, to follow up on what the minister has said, in terms of community organizations that have been approaching me in my constituency office saying they want to get involved and they're asking for a chance to sponsor workfare programs. That's just to add to what you said, Mr Minister.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I'd like to thank the honourable member for the question. As I was getting into, we are in the middle of a consultation process. We have been in the middle of it. We will continue it through not only myself but through our MPPs in the House. I do encourage community organizations to come forward with proposals to improve their communities. This is part of what we need to do. These programs are not going to be make-work programs, as prior governments have had, but will be programs which will improve communities across Ontario. We are looking for local solutions and that's why we recognize that, for example, the rural areas and the agricultural areas have different needs than the city, certainly the inner city and suburbia. That's why we're looking for local solutions and that's why we go through this consultation process.

The importance of all this is, of course, that we find a made-in-Ontario solution for all of us. That's what we're asking for right now. I'd like to repeat that we want to have these organizations come forward from across the province, not only to our party but to MPPs from across the aisle. I would encourage local solutions, and we need

to have these local solutions in order for us to complete this program.

PHYSICIAN SHORTAGE

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): My question is for the Minister of Health. I'd like the minister to address a significant issue that is happening not only in Essex county, the city of Windsor and LaSalle, but also in areas like St Catharines and many areas around Ontario—non-teaching centres. We have a problem with family physicians; namely, that there are some 30,000 to 40,000 people who do not have access to a family doctor. They have managed to find ways to create health centres, but even in Windsor as late as this week two doctors have left the Sandwich Community Health Centre in my community. Five years ago, 30 doctors were accepting names of new patients and today no doctors are accepting new names.

Dr Ian McLeod, the president of the Essex County Medical Society, estimates that our requirement is some 27 to 30 new doctors in our area. I'd like you to tell us whether you are going to classify Essex county as an underserved area and therefore let us access some special funding that you've allocated for areas like the north, because the issue of underservice for doctors in Windsor is not the same as in the north. There are areas all over Ontario that have to deal with an issue of not having access to doctors. I'd like to ask you, will you declare the Windsor-Essex area an underserved area? Please do not use the statistics that you currently are using, which include retired doctors, dead doctors, so that the numbers—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The question has been asked.

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I appreciate the question from the honourable member from Windsor. I will say that I live in a community that's not even as far away from Toronto as Windsor is and we have a severe shortage of doctors throughout my riding. In the town of Alliston, which is only 55 minutes away from this place when the traffic's good, we need more doctors too.

You know that we will review the application from Windsor-Essex. I had a meeting this morning with Dr Ian Warrack, the president of the OMA, Dr Wendy Graham, who wrote a report on primary care reform, and Dr Tom Dickson, the former president of the OMA, who is a consultant to the OMA now for primary care reform.

All members should be aware, because the government's already announced it, that 1996 will be the year we move ahead on primary care reform. You're right, the underserved area program designation does provide some tax-free grants. Seventy communities are under that program now; that's 30% more communities than in 1990. Clearly it's not working, although we will fully review the application from Windsor-Essex.

But the true and permanent solution to the problem we all face in all of our ridings is that we have enough doctors; we have to find through incentives and through primary care reform a way to better distribute them in the

province. We are fully committed to finding the solution. You know that because we went through Bill 26. You criticized the actions we took in Bill 26 to address this problem and now you want me to implement those very actions in your community.

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for Windsor-Riverside is out of order.

Hon Mr Wilson: I'll take that under advisement at the moment.

1520

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): We have some members in the west and east galleries that I would like to introduce.

Interjection.

The Speaker: The member for Oriole would please come to order.

We have David Smith from the riding of Lambton, Gordon Dean from Wentworth, John Sola from Mississauga East, Bob Callahan from Mississauga South; in the east gallery we have Howard Sheppard from Northumberland, Bill Barlow from Cambridge, Andy Watson from Chatham-Kent and George Ashe from Durham West. Welcome, past members.

BUSINESS OF THE HOUSE

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): Pursuant to standing order number 55, I wish to indicate the business of the House for the week of April 1, 1996.

On Monday, we will begin second reading of Bill 31, An Act to establish the College of Teachers.

On Tuesday, April 2, we will debate the motion of want of confidence standing in the name of the leader of the official opposition.

On Wednesday, April 3, we will continue with second reading of Bill 31, if not completed on Monday, after which we will begin second reading of Bill 30, An Act to establish the Education Quality and Accountability Office.

For Thursday morning's private members' business we will consider ballot item number 17, standing in the name of the member for Algoma-Manitoulin, and ballot item number 18, standing in the name of the member for Fort York. On the afternoon of Thursday, April 4, we will proceed with other legislation on the order paper, including the bill to be introduced this afternoon by the Minister of Education.

PETITIONS

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Health will begin to charge seniors and social assistance recipients a \$2 user fee for each prescription filled on June 1, 1996; and

"Whereas health care experts have asserted that user fees for drugs could jeopardize the health of individuals who can't afford to pay for their medication; and

"Whereas Ontario's ex-psychiatric population relies heavily on prescription drugs to remain stable and mental health care providers and the general public are scared of the outcome of these patients that can't afford to buy their medication because of the \$2 dispensing fee when it is normal policy to only prescribe them a two- or three-day supply of medication to prevent potential misuse or an overdose; and

"Whereas the perceived savings to health care from the \$2 copayment fee will not compensate for the suffering and misery caused by this user fee and will not even cover the cost of extra emergency services or repeated hospital services; the \$2 copayment will consequently not lead to cost savings, but rather increases in the case of expensive health care services; and

"Whereas the current Minister of Health, Jim Wilson, promised as an opposition MPP in a July 5 letter to Ontario pharmacists that his party would not endorse legislation that will punish patients to the detriment of health care in Ontario,

"Therefore we, the undersigned, strongly urge the government of Ontario to repeal this user fee plan before it takes effect on June 1, 1996, because of the potential dramatic increase in emergency and police services and the suffering and misery to human lives, especially psychiatric outpatients and those who depend on medication for their daily survival."

I've affixed my signature to this document.

PRIVATIZATION OF ONTARIO HYDRO

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): This petition is to the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the matter of selling Ontario Hydro is likely to come before the Legislature in the near future;

"Whereas we, the undersigned residents of Ontario who have, through the payment of electricity rates, paid for Ontario Hydro, are concerned about privatization of Ontario Hydro, leading to higher rates, lower reliability and compromised nuclear safety;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"Please preserve the public ownership of Ontario Hydro and refuse to sell this important public asset."

I fully agree with the contents of this petition and will be affixing my signature.

SCARBOROUGH GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I rise today to present a petition on behalf of a number of residents in Scarborough. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the recommendations of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council to close inpatient paediatric beds, the special care nursery and the burn unit at Scarborough General Hospital resulting in significantly reduced access to paediatric, newborn and burn care for a large geographic area of Scarborough; and

"Whereas the paediatric unit, special care nursery and burn unit at Scarborough General Hospital provide very cost-effective quality care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to:

"(1) Continue paediatric services, including inpatient paediatric beds;

"(2) Continue special care nursery services;

"(3) Continue and combine Metropolitan Toronto's burn care at Scarborough General Hospital."

I am pleased to affix my name to this petition.

ECONOMIC POLICY

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): To the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Mikeconomics is a copied blueprint for public policy in the state of New Jersey; and

"Whereas Mikeconomics has been tried in other jurisdictions with a resulting erosion of middle-class incomes; and

"Whereas Mikeconomics is a cynical shell game which benefits the most wealthy people in our society and sticks middle-class people with user fees and increased property taxes; and

"Whereas Mikeconomics proposes to make our streets safe and improve public education by laying off teachers and public officers;

"We, the following undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to abandon Mikeconomics and pursue public policy which includes all Ontarians."

I hereby affix my signature.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a petition signed by approximately 300 residents from one end of Algoma district to the other. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Transportation Minister Al Palladini is proposing legislation that will cost many towns their bus service.

"Bus companies are currently required to provide service for smaller towns as a condition of being given the rights to high-profit routes and charter markets. Minister Palladini's plan to deregulate will eliminate all conditions and requirements. As a result, hundreds of smaller communities like ours will lose bus service.

"Minister, people in smaller towns need bus service just as much as people in big cities. We depend on buses to visit friends, family, to get to appointments in nearby towns, to ship our Christmas presents and to receive our repair parts.

"The undersigned call upon the members of the Legislative Assembly to oppose bus deregulation and to eliminate our bus service."

I support the petition and affix my signature thereto.

JEU TÉLÉDIFFUSÉ

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott et Russell) : I have a petition with 1,739 signatures and I will read in French.

«Attendu que le jeu de Bingo provincial quotidien télédiffusé enlèvera la source principale de revenu des organismes à but non lucratif de diverses localités provinciales,

«Attendu que le gouvernement actuel a procédé à de nombreuses coupures envers les assistés sociaux et les municipalités, et que la demande d'aide auprès des organismes augmente considérablement,

«Attendu que les groupes de bénévoles, tels que les Chevaliers de Colomb, les Filles d'Isabelle, le club Lion, Rotary, Kiwanis, Boy Scouts, Optimist et combien d'autres ne seront plus en mesure de répondre aux besoins de personnes nécessiteuses,

«Nous, soussignés, exigeons que le gouvernement actuel abandonne ou modifie le projet d'organisé, le Bingo quotidien télédiffusé à l'échelle provinciale.»

TAX REDUCTION

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): I have pages of signatures in support of the following petition:

"To the Legislative Assembly:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to abandon, reduce or delay the provincial government's proposed 30% tax reduction in order to maintain needed funding and services for the two million people of Metro Toronto."

I agree with the content of this and I affix my signature to it.

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch Hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who, in numerous cases, require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendations contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I've affixed my signature.

1530

ST THOMAS PSYCHIATRIC HOSPITAL

Mr Peter North (Elgin): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That a recommendation by the psychiatric hospitals restructuring committee to close the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital be rejected.

"We believe the restructuring committee has not fully considered the case for retaining St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital.

"We believe the hospital and the community of St Thomas provide care and caring for psychiatric patients which is equal to and better than London.

"We believe closure of the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital will have a devastating impact on the economy and the residents of the St Thomas and Elgin county area.

"We believe London can better absorb the impact of closure of the London Psychiatric Hospital.

"Finally, we believe it would be cheaper for the government to retain the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital in terms of capital improvements required to both facilities.

"Therefore, we request that the government refrain from endorsing and implementing the recommendation to close the St Thomas Psychiatric Hospital."

It's signed by some 16,000 residents.

ST JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have yet another petition regarding the proposed closure of St Joseph's Hospital in my home town of Hamilton. It's a petition to the Minister of Health and the Hamilton-Wentworth District Health Council:

"Whereas the Hamilton-Wentworth health action task force, as part of their report, has recommended the closure of St Joseph's Hospital in Hamilton; and

"Whereas it is recognized the health care system should be made as efficient as possible; and

"Whereas the quality of health care service in our community should not be sacrificed in the name of efficiency; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government promised to protect the quality of health care in Ontario; and

"Whereas we, the undersigned, believe that maintaining the presence of St Joseph's Hospital in downtown Hamilton is a vital component of our health care system;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Minister of Health and the Hamilton-Wentworth District Health Council ensure the continuance of St Joseph's Hospital at its present site."

Again, I affix my signature.

JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): The petition I have reads as follows:

"Whereas this Conservative government's stated plan in the Common Sense Revolution is to improve the long-term economic prospects for Ontario; and

"Whereas research from all over the world shows early childhood education leads to lower dropout rates; improved reading, math and language skills; less chance of future unemployment, teen pregnancy or delinquency; and higher enrolment in post-secondary education, thus resulting in a better-educated, highly skilled workforce; and

"Whereas this Conservative government states it is committed to ensuring a larger share of the education dollar goes to the classroom; and

"Whereas this Conservative government fully expects boards to meet transfer reductions by cutting costs outside the classroom; and

"Whereas this Conservative government has made junior kindergarten a matter of choice for local school boards and has reduced the funding for junior kindergarten;

"Therefore, to ensure this Conservative government meets its stated commitments in regard to education and to Ontario, we, the undersigned, call on the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Education and Training to restore the funding of junior kindergarten to its previous level and require all school boards to offer junior kindergarten classes."

I affix my signature to this petition as I'm in agreement with its contents.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I've got a petition here addressed to the Honourable the Lieutenant Governor and Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario government plans to sell off public services to corporations that are going to run them for profit; and

"Whereas after the corporate takeover, it's strictly going to be user-pay for the services we now depend on; and

"Whereas our clean water and clean air and water standards and worker safety rules are being relaxed because corporations don't like rules that interfere with profits; and

"Whereas privatization is being sold as a way to save tax dollars even though large companies pay little or no taxes while individual Canadians, working women and men, pay most of the total tax bill; and

"Whereas Bill 7 was introduced in the interests of facilitating the government's privatization agenda by stripping public sector workers of their rights to retain fair working conditions when services are transferred or privatized;

"We, the following citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to abandon the sell-off of Ontario's public services and reinstate successor rights for public service employees."

That's signed by Tom Ferguson and Eric Sousa and Ryan Cooke of Welland, and hundreds of others. I've affixed my name, and I'm asking Adam Jakop, a page here at the Legislative Assembly, to deliver this to the table, having affixed my signature.

JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Orillia): I have a petition:

"Whereas this Conservative government's stated goal in the Common Sense Revolution is to improve the long-term economic prospects for Ontario;

"Whereas research from all over the world shows early childhood education leads to lower dropout rates, improved reading, math and language skills, less chance of future unemployment, teen pregnancy or delinquency and higher enrolment in post-secondary education, thus resulting in a better, highly educated, skilled workforce; and

"Whereas this Conservative government states it is committed to ensuring a larger share of the education dollar goes to the classroom; and

"Whereas this Conservative government fully expects boards to meet transfer reductions by cutting costs outside the classroom; and

"Whereas this Conservative government has made junior kindergarten a matter of choice for local boards and has reduced the funding for junior kindergarten,

"Therefore, to ensure this Conservative government meets its stated commitment in regard to education and to Ontario, we, the undersigned, call on the Minister of Finance and the Minister of Education and Training to restore the funding of junior kindergarten to its previous level and require all school boards to offer junior kindergarten classes."

As a person who participated in the first junior kindergarten class in the province of Ontario, I affix my signature to this very worthwhile petition.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a petition. It's from a number of residents in rural Ontario, and it says:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Transportation Minister Al Palladini is proposing legislation that will cost many towns their bus service.

"Bus companies are currently required to provide service for smaller towns as a condition of being given the rights to high-profit routes and charter markets. Minister Palladini's plan to deregulate will eliminate all conditions and requirements. As a result, hundreds of small communities like ours will lose bus service.

"Minister, people in smaller towns need bus service just as much as people in big cities. We depend upon buses to visit family and friends, to get to appointments in nearby towns, to ship our Christmas presents and to receive our repair parts.

"The undersigned call upon the members of the Legislative Assembly to oppose bus deregulation and the elimination of our bus service."

This petition is signed by 15 residents of rural Ontario, and I have affixed my signature as well.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

Mr Arnott from the standing committee on the Legislative Assembly presented the committee's Report on Security in the Legislative Precincts and moved its adoption.

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): It's my pleasure to introduce this report today. Mr Speaker, as you're aware, the Speaker asked the committee of the Legislative Assembly to consider the broad issue of security in the legislative precinct some time ago. As part of the examination of this issue, the committee toured our own Legislative Building examining the security measures which were in place here; we received submissions from the Speaker, Clerk of the House, Sergeant at Arms, staff of

the assembly, the media and members of the public; and a subcommittee of the full committee visited Quebec's National Assembly, the House of Commons of Canada and the Senate of Canada during the break.

I want to extend my warm thanks to all members of the committee who worked together extremely well to reach conclusions that are unanimously supported. I would also like to thank all the witnesses who took the time to appear before the committee, the Speaker, the Clerk of the House and my friend the Sergeant at Arms, and to thank our committee staff, Lisa Freeman, Peter Sibenik and Rosemarie Singh, who assisted us.

The report outlines the concerns of the committee with respect to certain incidents and occurrences in the legislative precinct and outlines the committee's recommendations. I would just like to mention four of the 10 recommendations that we've put forward.

The committee is recommending that the permanent crowd control barriers at the front of the Legislative Building be removed.

We are recommending that the legislative security service be restructured so that it has clear and direct lines of authority, it is accountable to the Speaker and is sensitive to the parliamentary environment.

Further, we recommend that the entry and exit protocols for the precincts be reformed to welcome our visitors and ensure the safety of everyone.

Finally, the committee is recommending that those organizing demonstrations or special events on the legislative grounds continue to register their intent with the legislative security service and that a protocol for cooperation and liaison between security personnel and these individuals or groups be implemented.

This committee looks forward to the report being called for debate in the House in the near future, but at this time I move adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.
1540

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT, 1996

LOI DE 1996 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION

Mr Snobelen moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill 34, An Act to amend the Education Act / Projet de loi 34, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Does the minister wish to make a brief statement?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): No, Mr Speaker, I introduced this bill earlier today.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TD TRUST COMPANY ACT, 1995

Mr Christopherson, in the absence of Mr Marchese, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr24, An Act respecting TD Trust Company and Central Guaranty Trust Company.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Marchese moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr24, An Act respecting TD Trust Company and Central Guaranty Trust Company.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

CITY OF SCARBOROUGH ACT, 1995

Mr Newman moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr41, An Act respecting the City of Scarborough.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Newman moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr41, An Act respecting the City of Scarborough.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

1092040 ONTARIO INC ACT, 1996

Mr Sergio, in the absence of Mr McGuinty, moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr43, An Act to revive 1092040 Ontario Inc.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Mr Sergio, in the absence of Mr McGuinty, moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill Pr 43, An Act to revive 1092040 Ontario Inc.

The Deputy Speaker: Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

LAND USE PLANNING AND PROTECTION ACT, 1995

LOI DE 1995 SUR LA PROTECTION ET L'AMÉNAGEMENT DU TERRITOIRE

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for third reading of Bill 20, An Act to promote economic growth and protect the environment by streamlining the land use planning and development system through amendments related to planning, development, municipal and heritage matters / Projet de loi 20, Loi visant à promouvoir la croissance économique et à protéger l'environnement en rationalisant le système d'aménagement et de mise en valeur du territoire au moyen de modifications touchant des questions relatives à l'aménagement, la mise en valeur, les municipalités et le patrimoine.

Mr Jean-Marc Lalonde (Prescott and Russell): I would like to take this opportunity to thank and congratulate the member for Oxford, Ernie Hardeman, the PA to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, for the way he has conducted himself at the public hearings.

Mr Speaker, I will be doing my presentation in both languages, so I'd just like to inform you ahead of time.

Un des points très importants qui étaient apportés à mon attention durant notre tournée à travers la province, c'était surtout le laps de temps qui est accordé aux municipalités pour répondre aux demandes qui sont déposées. Comme j'ai dit dans le passé, il est très difficile de rencontrer les dates ou le temps alloué aux municipalités, lorsque nous savons que plus de 80 % des 833 municipalités en Ontario plus les six conseils régionaux sont composés d'une population de moins de 5000. Lorsque nous parlons d'une population de moins de 5000, cela veut dire que nous sommes limités avec les ressources que l'on doit avoir à l'hôtel de ville où à la communauté.

Avec ce projet de loi, même si j'appuie le projet à 85 % à date — I am supporting this project at 85%. I have to say that because definitely it will stimulate the economy in Ontario and this is what we need. But there are some points, really, that have to be looked at.

After listening to over 100 people that made presentations to the committee, I would say 90% of them have referred to the lapse of time or the time frame that was allocated for response by the municipalities.

I've said in the past for municipalities with less than 5,000 population, every time they will have to hire a consultant to prepare the amendments. Preparing the amendments at the present time, they have bylaws within the municipalities that stipulate the amount of money that will have to be submitted to the municipality by the requester. All those bylaws will have to be changed, and I still wonder if the municipality will know ahead of time how much it will cost to proceed with the amendment submitted to the municipality.

J'ai mentionné auparavant que les municipalités sont limitées par les ressources actuelles, et surtout avec les coupures gouvernementales auxquelles ils ont fait face depuis l'annonce du 29 novembre dernier. Mon comté seulement, la circonscription de Prescott et Russell, reçoit des coupures de \$3,2 million en 1996. Plusieurs municipalités ont dû laisser aller des employés parce que les ressources financières ne sont plus là. Et en retournant, le fait qu'on doit embaucher des firmes de consultation, je pourrais dire que ces consultants doivent venir des centres urbains pour aller desservir la population dans les centres ruraux. Ce sera très difficile, de rencontrer toutes les demandes ou de rencontrer vraiment la joie de vivre dans ces communautés.

1550

J'ai eu l'expérience auparavant, en tant que maire d'une municipalité pendant 15 ans, et 25 ans au conseil municipal, nous aussi, même avec une population d'au-delà 8000 personnes à Rockland, Ontario, étions obligés d'aller chercher des consultants à l'extérieur. Pour rencontrer nos demandes, on était obligés de recruter des personnes des grands centres tels que Montréal, Ottawa et Toronto. Je peux vous dire que ces gens-là ne connaissent pas la communauté. On doit travailler de très près avec les personnes de l'hôtel de ville ou de la communauté. Cela veut dire que si la communauté n'a pas le personnel en place, on doit dire aux consultants, pour

rencontrer les dates qui nous ont été soumises, d'aller devant et de faire le mieux qu'ils peuvent.

Mais lorsque l'on va procéder de cette manière, cela ne veut pas dire que nous allons rencontrer toutes les nécessités ou les critères ou les demandes de la communauté. C'est un grand danger.

J'ai dit tout à l'heure que plus de 80 % des municipalités en Ontario comptent moins de 5000 de population. Ça veut dire que qu'au-delà de 500 communautés, 500, 600 communautés vont devoir embaucher les firmes de consultants.

Mais une chose qui est très importante, il y a une firme de consultants qui nous a fait une présentation à London. En partant, je me suis senti accoté au mur, parce que je pouvais voir que la personne ne faisait qu'un «sales pitch». Elle représentait 30 firmes de consultants, puis elle-même a dit qu'il serait très difficile de rencontrer le «time frame» qui était indiqué dans le projet de loi. Mais il faut dire que tout ce qui était inclus dans le projet de loi n'est pas à l'encontre du développement des municipalités, surtout rurale. Ça va définitivement aider à accélérer le processus pour commencer le développement.

Nous avons demandé un certain temps de considérer d'allouer 120 jours au lieu de 90 jours. Lorsqu'on parle de 180 jours, nous avons réduit la période de temps de 50 %.

Je regarde la municipalité de Gloucester, qui a un personnel je ne sais pas de combien de personnes, mais elle-même a recommandé 120 jours. Je regarde la ville de London, qui a dû laisser aller 12 de ses urbanistes tout récemment parce qu'ils ont dit, avec les coupures de transferts de la province, qu'il était impossible de garder ces gens en place. Donc, eux-mêmes ont dit qu'il sera impossible de rencontrer les «deadlines» qui nous ont accordés.

Je regarde ensuite le comté de Oxford. Dans la présentation qui était faite par l'urbaniste d'Oxford, beaucoup de municipalités dans l'Ontario voudraient avoir un consultant ou un urbaniste de la trame de celle d'Oxford, mais lui-même était honnête. Il a dit qu'il est impossible de rencontrer les critères qui sont mentionnés à l'intérieur de ce projet de loi. Beaucoup de municipalités croient qu'il serait très difficile.

Je regarde ici le County Planning Directors of Ontario: "Although the time frames are tight"—this is one of the comments that was mentioned. I am just going to read what the member for Oxford said when he came in front of the board. "Unless municipalities have the ability to require that sufficient information necessary to adequately process the application is received when the application is submitted, the time frames are unrealistic without complete application information submitted up front in the process, municipalities could be forced to refuse the application on the basis of lack of technical merits to achieve the proposed time frame."

So I could see that even in the county where my good chairman was presiding over all the meetings, even in there they said it's impossible to meet.

Maintenant je vais aller sur le côté des logements, des appartements dans les sous-sols. Encore là, à plusieurs endroits, je dois féliciter le gouvernement de ce point-ci parce qu'ils ont emporté un amendement qui va protéger

ceux qui sont déjà en place. C'est l'article 42(76), donc on a modifié après toutes les présentations qui nous ont été faites. Je tiens à féliciter le gouvernement.

I'd like to congratulate the government for taking into consideration especially this man from Ottawa who came in front of the committee and said: "What is going to happen? I've just spent \$5,000 to renovate my basement. I need that money. I just took the retirement and without this additional revenue I will not be able to meet both ends." The government has accepted. Thank you, all the people who sat on this committee, and also the government for taking this into consideration. Also, from there, we have taken all the comments that were brought up in front of us. Apparently, there are over 4,000 in Ontario who have built apartments in their basements and the government has taken this into consideration. So this is a good part of the bill.

There are 150,000 only in Metro Toronto who have built or renovated their homes to accommodate a second apartment in the basement. Again, this was very important especially for university students, for example, and young couples that are getting married; to be able to buy a house they had to create a second apartment in their home to be able to meet both ends and make the payments of their house.

J'ai aussi un article qui m'a été fait parvenir de la clinique juridique de Prescott et Russell qui a été présenté par M^{re} Louise Toone. Elle me réfère à l'article 31(3.2). L'article tel qu'il existe dans la loi sur les résidents restreint l'autorité des municipalités d'adopter des règlements concernant des appartements dans certaines maisons bien précises, soit «detached houses, row houses, residential units contained in the house». Il est donc important de souligner que la loi sur les résidents s'applique seulement dans des circonstances très précises. On parle d'un seul appartement et pas de plusieurs. Cet appartement doit être situé dans une maison telle que définie, donc pas n'importe où. C'est un des points d'inquiétude que la clinique juridique de Prescott et Russell avait lors de la présentation.

En tant qu'ancien politicien municipal, élu municipal, il y avait du danger avec le projet de loi qui existait. Lorsqu'on a décidé il y a quelques ans de mettre en place le projet de loi qui permettait la construction d'appartements dans les sous-sols, nous avons oublié de prendre en considération la sécurité des gens, parce que très souvent nous avons procédé et nous n'avons pas regardé la sécurité des gens du côté d'incendies et beaucoup d'autres choses. Nous avons oublié de regarder si les conduites d'eau permettaient l'addition d'appartements dans les sous-sols, si nous avions assez de stationnement pour permettre un deuxième logis dans la maison, si nous rencontrons le code de construction. Ce sont des points qui ont été oubliés, et maintenant le tout sera laissé à la municipalité.

J'espère que les municipalités vont comprendre que de nos jours il est très important de regarder surtout des familles à faible revenu. Souvent on voudrait garder chez nous nos parents, mais avec le nouveau projet de loi, la municipalité, à l'intérieur de son plan directeur, ne permet pas le deuxième appartement ou logement au sous-sol. On ne pourra pas chercher nos parents ou leur demander de

demeurer avec nous. Si nous regardons en Afrique, l'aîné de la famille est obligé de garder ses parents. Ici au Canada, en Amérique du nord, c'est différent. Mais ça peut être juste l'inverse : les parents qui désirent donner une chance à leurs enfants de se ramasser l'argent nécessaire pour s'acheter une nouvelle propriété pouvaient ouvrir un appartement au deuxième ou au sous-sol afin de les aider à construire leur maison.

1600

J'ai un autre point qui est important pour les comtés unis de Prescott et Russell, le secteur de l'aménagement du territoire. On nous dit que la déclaration de principes interprovinciaux reliés au projet de loi 20 ne sont pas claires en ce qui concerne le développement résidentiel dans les secteurs ruraux non agricoles. Comme j'ai dit tout à l'heure, plus de 80 % des municipalités sont d'une population de moins de 5000. Donc, tout cela veut dire qu'on doit prendre ça en considération.

Je sais qu'il est peut-être un peu tard d'apporter des amendements, mais le Parti libéral ainsi que le Nouveau Parti démocratique nous avons déposé au-delà de 80 demandes d'amendements ou de modifications. Aucune des nôtres n'a été acceptée, aucune.

Not a single one of the amendments submitted by the Liberal Party or the NDP was accepted. I've read, I've gone through; 35 amendments of the government were accepted. I think there were good amendments submitted by both of the opposition parties and I really feel they should have been accepted, but probably by trying to lobby the government we'll be able to come up with some amendments at a later date.

Un autre point qui inquiète certainement les gens de l'Ontario, c'est le fait que lorsqu'on doit soumettre une demande d'un nouveau plan de subdivision, il n'est pas nécessaire pour une municipalité d'avoir une réunion publique. J'encourage toutes les municipalités en Ontario, lorsqu'on parle de développement d'une nouvelle subdivision, à informer le public. Si l'on ne procède pas avec les réunions publiques pour informer le public, cela, de temps en temps, peut mener à des dépenses additionnelles pour le développeur qui demande la subdivision, ainsi que pour la municipalité, et tout ça peut ralentir le processus. Donc, je crois que c'est un autre point qu'on aurait dû prendre en considération : les réunions publiques lorsqu'on reçoit une nouvelle demande de subdivision.

L'autre point très important, c'est le droit d'appel à la CAMO, ce qui est le OMB. Actuellement, lorsque le comité d'aménagement du territoire ou le comité de —

Mr Tony Ruprecht (Parkdale): Committee of adjustment?

M. Lalonde : — the committee of adjustment — se rencontrent pour une demande de séparation de terrain, si le comité d'ajustement prend une position — je sais que le conseil municipal a le dernier mot, mais la chose que je trouve regrettable, c'est que nous avons retiré le droit d'appel à la CAMO. Le droit d'appel à la CAMO, j'ai toujours cru que c'était donner le droit de la personne d'aller plus haut afin d'obtenir justice. Mais dans ce cas ici, nous avons retiré du projet de loi 20 le droit que nous avions dans le passé. Remarquez bien que cette partie était très importante puisque, en retirant cette partie du

projet de loi, maintenant, lorsque nous allons voir que notre demande va être refusée au comité d'ajustement, nous allons précéder et contourner la loi en demandant un amendement ou une modification au règlement de zonage ou au plan directeur. Cela deviendrait coûteux, il va ralentir le processus et il peut affecter l'économie de la municipalité. Donc, je pense que c'est un point très important que nous aurions dû prendre en considération.

Je regarde ici London Development Institute: "Where there is one or more member of council on the committee of adjustment, the right of appeal to the whole of the council or to the Ontario Municipal Board should be retained. Failure to do so would place too much emphasis on one council member." I could see that because, remember, in small communities especially, the mayor, the councillors go to church on Sunday and they meet the developers and it's very hard for them, for the members of council, to say no to those developers. But by having the right to appeal to the OMB, it gives a chance and also I thought it was very important that they had this process.

I have another one here from the county of Lanark. I'm just going to read a short line: "The county of Lanark recommends that the provision of Bill 163 which permits direct appeal of a decision on a minor variance application to the Ontario Municipal Board by the appellant be maintained in the legislation to promote a fair and objective planning process."

I have another one from the London Chamber of Commerce, that the province consider requiring the Ontario Municipal Board to hold a procedural meeting within 30 days of receiving an appeal.

This one is from the city of Owen Sound: "Bill 20 would remove the requirement that public meetings be held prior to a committee of adjustment of a council considering an application for a consent, severance, subdivision or condominium. The city of Owen Sound's practice has been to hold a public hearing before considering draft approval of a subdivision or a condominium plan."

I think this bill is to stimulate the economy. As I said at the beginning, I support this bill at 85%; but the members of the government should have taken into consideration all the amendments that were submitted—not all of them but at least some of them—by the two opposition parties.

Another point which bothers me is the one for the agriculture and environment process. At the present time, anyone who wants to submit an application for a subdivision doesn't have to notify, or the municipality doesn't have to notify, the agriculture people or the Ministry of Environment and Energy. That could create some problems, especially at the agricultural level.

I just remembered that lately in my riding, there are two appeals, or two court cases. People from the urban community have moved to the rural area. We have given permission to build homes around the agriculture or around barns. Right now, the people just cannot accept the dust that comes from that, cannot accept the smell, especially in the fall or in the spring, that comes from the farmers' community. I think it's very important that they should mention in the bill that no residential construction

should be built within a certain number of metres from the agricultural or farming community.

I would like to conclude by saying again that it's been a pleasure to travel across the province, especially in the region of Sudbury. I was going to forget the region of Sudbury. I would like to mention that in French.

Je voudrais le mentionner en français. Je me rappelle Monsieur le maire de Noëlville, qui est venu devant notre comité et qui nous a dit que le procédé pour obtenir des séparations de terrains dans son district est très difficile.

J'ai mentionné hier que je me rappelle que cet homme avait une ferme de 360 acres qui lui avait été laissée par son père, 360 acres, et la séparation de terrains n'est pas permis dans le nord de Sudbury. Je ne peux pas comprendre qu'à l'intérieur de ce projet de loi, nous n'avons pas pris en considération toutes les demandes qui viennent du nord de l'Ontario. Je sais qu'il y a des raisons pour lesquelles on ne peut pas accepter certaines séparations de terrains, mais dans ce cas ici, je peux dire, 360 acres et on ne peut même pas détacher 10 acres de terre pour la construction d'une maison unifamiliale pour les membres de sa famille. Je trouve ça regrettable, que nous n'avons pas pris en considération les points soulevés par les gens de Sudbury.

Once again, I would like to say thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak on Bill 20.

1610

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Comments and questions?

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I listened attentively to excerpts of the member for Prescott and Russell's speech. I found it rather interesting that he seems to be in many cases supporting this legislation when compared to the speeches by his colleagues from Kingston and The Islands and others, particularly the member for St Catharines.

Having said that, I found one particular matter very interesting and that was his suggestion that in many cases in small towns, developers meet with municipal leaders at church. I wasn't sure that this is where these kinds of discussions usually are carried out, but I would agree with those who might think that this would certainly be an unholy alliance.

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Orillia): I would like to comment on my colleague's remarks. I think he accurately portrays the content of this bill. Further, I think his experience as a municipal councillor has led him to bring an understanding to this legislation that I, as a former municipal councillor, share; that is, each municipal council has its own dynamic across the province. Some are better at planning than others. Certainly a one-size-fits-all solution across Ontario is not always best, and most municipalities resent having Queen's Park interfere with their planning processes.

I share with him the concerns he has about this legislation. While I am concerned that the legislation has some aspects that are eminently supportable, I agree with him that many aspects of this bill could have been improved if the government had listened to the opposition parties at committee and made some substantial amendments to this piece of legislation.

My colleague points out that it has impact for agriculture and rural areas and I would say to him that it also has very significant impact for urban centres. The development of basement apartments, for example, which has been debated in this place over a significant period, which was permitted by the previous government, is now being made illegal once again. I would suggest to the government that there's got to be a better way than enforcing a situation where you are encouraging now non-conforming uses and you will have some that are legal and some that are illegal and you're creating chaos in a situation. I suggest they've made it worse, and I agree and congratulate my colleague on his excellent remarks.

M. Steve Gilchrist (Scarborough-Est) : Je voudrais remercier mon collègue de Prescott et Russell pour son excellent discours.

It certainly was a pleasure to travel the province with the other members of the committee. I respect our colleague from Prescott and Russell for doing what I hope we see more of in this House: recognizing that while we may never agree on all aspects of bills, when the government does recognize and reflect the views that have been brought before it by the groups making presentations and by the members opposite, that's worthy of comment as well. I genuinely appreciate your contribution throughout those three weeks of hearings and your comments here today.

There were three areas where significant concessions were made: the first being minor variances and the right to appeal to the OMB; the restoration of the right for public hearings for plans of subdivision and for consent; and of course, the change of the dates for the approval of basement apartments, as they're called. This is clearly an important issue and, with all respect to our colleague from Oriole, who just spoke, we believe an issue best left to local decision-making.

In my riding of Scarborough East we had considerable controversy over the past few years about the pressures created on public services by the, at the time, illegal basement apartments. The previous government took one position, and I don't disagree that that was their right at the time, but it created a whole series of problems that Scarborough is still having difficulty catching up to in terms of facilities in our schools and libraries and other social amenities to deal with this unexpected population increase in an already mature market.

I thank the member for his comments and particularly for recognizing that the government did in fact listen in three very important areas—and I'd like to think in all areas—that were presented before it during the weeks of the hearings.

Mr Mario Sergio (Yorkview): I wish to congratulate the member for Prescott and Russell on his presentation. I think he had demonstrated that not only—

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm sorry to interrupt the honourable member, but my colleague has stood twice and you passed by her in rotation, and that's fine. We expected you would come back and recognize her, but I think this is the last one and now she'll be denied what was rightfully her position. So I'd ask unanimous consent

to allow the member to continue, and also my colleague, which is probably the easiest way.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Yorkview has conceded.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Thank you very much. I appreciate that. I wanted to comment in particular to the member for Prescott and Russell. We spent a fair amount of time on the committee, although I was unable to travel—but in the city of Toronto. I must say that I'm not surprised to see, with all due respect, that there's a real split among the Liberals on this bill. It's like before the election—Lyn McLeod at a leadership meeting contest where she talked about agreeing that they would get rid of rent controls if they were elected and they would try to find a balance between the landlords and the tenants, which sounds to me a lot like what the Tories are saying. I'll bet you're now sorry you conceded, aren't you?

I want to point out to the member that I understand, coming from the municipal sector, he is concerned about making sure that there is real balance. We sat through the same committees and heard the same people talk, and the problem is there isn't a real balance here. I think what you see happening in the city of London, which I don't have time to go into right now—the member for Middlesex talked to it yesterday. He was totally wrong about what's happening there. Unfortunately, what people are pointing out to us, the relaxation of some of the regulations—not only that, but the regulations around the standards within the Ontario building code. When you put all of those together, we're going back to the days, you will recall, in the 1970s and 1980s—and I'm sure my colleague from Algoma will remember some of this—of downright corruption in some cases. I'm not saying it happens all over in all municipalities; the majority of politicians are good people. But the corruption and very, very bad development that happened at that time is going to happen again.

The Deputy Speaker: The member for Prescott and Russell has two minutes.

Mr Lalonde: I'd just like to say, first of all, that there is definitely no split within our party.

Mr Sergio: Right on.

Mr John R. Baird (Nepean): There's two splits in my party.

Mr Sergio: There isn't any. Look at us. We are well united.

Mr Lalonde: I said right at the beginning that I support this bill at 85%, but there are some areas that definitely I don't support. This party doesn't operate the American style either. We are the Canadian-style party, the Liberal Party. I'm happy to hear that the government has taken into consideration the point that I brought forth concerning the appeal process for minor variance, and also the public meeting for new subdivision.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): We forced them into it.

Mr Lalonde: We forced them probably, yes. We have to put pressure all the way through. This is our role. We played it. That's what we wanted and I say thank you to the government for accepting the official opposition requests.

1620

Mr Wildman: I want to participate in this debate because I consider the Planning Act to be central to the whole issue of sustainability and sustainable development in our province. For many years, on both sides of the House I have, as many members have, taken into account the need to ensure that we have economic development that is sustainable, that is carried out in a way that protects the environment and ensures that we have jobs not only in the immediate future but for the long term, that development takes place in such a way that we do not compromise the integrity of the environment for the future.

The Planning Act, land use planning, is central to this. We recognize that many people are concerned about the time and costs involved in dealing with issues around proper planning, environmental assessments and so on, so when we were in government we did everything we could to try to expedite the proper procedures and shorten the time it takes to get environmental assessments prepared, considered, reviewed, to hold hearings and have them approved. That, of course, affected the way we could plan in the province.

My concern about this government's approach is that while they say they are in favour of a one-window approach—I'll come back to this in a moment—they also have the overall ideological position that regulation *per se* is wrong and bad, that any kind of regulation adds to cost, delays things and makes it more difficult for entrepreneurs to make a buck, essentially.

Mr Peter L. Preston (Brant-Haldimand): And to provide jobs.

Mr Wildman: And to provide jobs. The unfortunate thing is that I think this government and members of the government party truly believe there is a contradiction between jobs and environmental protection, that you cannot produce the numbers of jobs we need and all want in this province if you have regulation that protects the environment.

As a result, they've decided to come down on the side of economic development, hoping it'll produce jobs, and are forgetting about planning and the environment. Otherwise, what would be the reason for this amendment and this change in the planning legislation? It only came into effect last March and has not had the opportunity to be studied, to be experienced, to demonstrate that there may be problems. There are always problems in legislation that can lead to need for improvements, but this government is not prepared to see the Planning Act that came into effect last March actually operate for some time so they can determine what changes should be made.

Instead, they've come into government, they've come into power and decided to move immediately to move amendments, make changes, to essentially gut the Planning Act without having the opportunity to determine if these are the changes that are best in terms of sustainability.

The one-window approach is a very attractive approach. We attempted to develop that when we were in government with regard to small business dealings with government so there would be one agency the small business community could deal with and know they

would be dealing with to get matters dealt with, to deal with regulation and so on. But when we did that, we did not at the same time just say that all the other government agencies that may have a role in this particular matter the business community is concerned about or a particular businessman is concerned about should not be involved. Simply, we said that the one window, the agency, should in fact act as an advocate in many cases on behalf of the business community with those other agencies.

But in this particular bill, what the government is proposing is that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing will be the one window, but all those other ministries that do have a say with regard to planning and approvals—or denials—are not clearly involved. If we're going to have a proposal for a subdivision development, let's say, on prime agricultural land in a municipality, in the past, of course, that proposal would have had to be reviewed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, and the Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs officials would then express its views to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing and to the municipality before it could be approved. If they had objections, those objections would have to be mitigated before it could get approval. If they could not be mitigated, then approval would not be given.

In the same sense, if other ministries, such as the Ministry of Natural Resources, had concerns, they were required to review the proposal and to make comments. Again, if their comments were negative, there would have to be mitigation done, and if it could not be properly done, it would not be approved.

The government still maintains that OMAFRA and MNR, for instance, and the Ministry of Environment and Energy will have a say here, but there's nothing in the legislation that says they have to be consulted, they have to be in agreement before the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the one-window agency, can give approval. I don't understand that. I don't understand why we would not want to ensure that all of those agencies that have different expertise are satisfied. Perhaps you'd like to put time lines on their reviews and make those kinds of changes; that might be reasonable. But why isn't it clear in the legislation that they must agree?

The other day during the debate I mentioned the whole question of wetlands protection. I believe this is crucial. In southern Ontario the total acreage of wetlands has decreased to the point where we now only have somewhere between 13% and 20% of the original wetlands in southern Ontario. This is very serious. There are many, many species of plants and animals and birds and fish that are dependent on those kinds of habitat. If we continue to see them drained or filled in, those species will disappear; it's as simple as that. What effect does that have on the overall ecology of which we human beings are part?

Right now there is something that biologists and environmentalists are not quite certain about. It appears that amphibians are disappearing all over the world. Nobody knows exactly why. We suspect it must have something to do with something or some things in the environment that are affecting the reproduction of

amphibians, or if not their reproduction, then their habitat that makes it possible for them to survive.

Mr Tony Clement (Brampton South): It's Mike Harris's fault.

Mr Wildman: This is serious. It's not Mike Harris's fault. I never suggested it was Mike Harris's fault. I said it was a global problem. I don't know what you think of Mike Harris's role in this world, but he is not the ruler of the world.

The fact is that amphibians are disappearing. This is a wake-up call for the rest of us. Amphibians are like the canary in the mine. You know, in the old days miners used to take a canary down underground because if the canary died, it indicated there must be something in the atmosphere that was causing problems; there would be gases and it was time to get out. What's happening with amphibians is the same thing: It's a warning call for all of the rest of us, all of the other species. It's a warning call for us as humans. It's a warning call for governments, for business, for all of us. We don't know what's causing it, but it's happening.

I suspect that one of the factors, and I admit that it's probably only one of the factors, that is contributing to this is the decline and disappearance of habitat. I don't know that for certain but I suspect that's one of the reasons, and if we continue to do what we've done in the past in this province, which is fill in wetlands to develop golf courses, for instance—that's been done on a number of occasions in different parts of this province—or fill them in because we want to develop shopping centres or subdivisions, or if we continue simply to drain them for agricultural purposes, that habitat disappears and the species that are dependent on that habitat will not be able to survive. What does that tell us? It tells us that we are harming the environment, we are harming the ecosystem, and this legislation does not provide proper protection for that wetland habitat. We cannot afford to have wetlands in southern Ontario decline to the point where we have even less than 13% of them left.

1630

I mentioned the problem of migrating water fowl. They must have rest areas. They must have nesting areas. I know this is a problem for many private land owners in this province, because if they have a portion of their land which is wetland, what used to be called swamp, and they want to drain it, they very much resent the fact that someone comes along from the Ministry of Natural Resources and says, "Wait a minute, this is an important rest area for migrating geese," for instance. "If you drain it, it'll be difficult for those birds to continue to migrate from the James Bay lowlands to the southern US and back."

Many people will say: "Well, wait a minute, this is private property. This is my property. I have the right to decide what's going to happen on my property." And everybody agrees that private property means that land owners have the right to decide what happens, but they do not have the right to decide what happens on their property if it harms the rest of us. I think everyone will agree to that. I would hope most people would agree that if I have a property, I do not have the right to do something on my property that harms my neighbour, because

my neighbour has rights. It's just a matter of good neighbourliness. Frankly, the other species, in a way, are our neighbours.

Mr Preston: They don't pay taxes on the property, though.

Mr Wildman: No, that's quite true. Geese do not pay taxes, and geese can be a nuisance. There's no question, geese can be a nuisance. They eat crops. Some of them become lazy and don't migrate any more and they become a nuisance. There's no question. No, they don't pay taxes, but if your only criterion for what we do in this province is whether or not you get tax revenue, then you've got a real problem because, frankly, I think it's pretty elementary to recognize that only people can pay taxes.

We haven't yet begun to tax the animals, the birds and the fish. That then would mean that the government does not give you any importance unless you pay taxes, then that means all of the other species on this globe are not important. That is an outmoded view. It is a view that humans somehow can exploit everything without any reference to what it does to other species. It's a silly position. It's not only silly, it's dangerous.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): And it's immoral.

Mr Wildman: Yes, it is immoral.

So we have a piece of legislation that now says planning does not have to be "in compliance" with provincial policy statements, but rather they should just "have regard for." We don't know what exactly that means, and there are arguments among lawyers about what it means.

We also don't even know what the policies are going to be because they are being changed, and the legislation is being passed before we see what they are going to be. We do know that they are probably going to be weakened in terms of protection. This is a cause of very serious concern.

If they are not going to be weakened, then why are they being changed? Are they being strengthened? Are we going to have more stringent controls to protect wetlands and ravines? Perhaps we should, I don't know. But if that's the way we're going then let us know, because it seems very likely that is not the way we're going. We have a number of endangered species whose habitat will be harmed if there are not provisions in the law that will make it a requirement for municipal planners, for municipalities to take their habitats into concern when making planning decisions. This piece of legislation does not require it.

It's been suggested in this debate that we on the opposition side are being unfair to the members of the government party, as if we are saying that they don't have any concern for the environment. Well, the last comment, "If you don't pay taxes, then you don't count," does indicate that, but I don't think those views are necessarily held throughout the Conservative caucus. I think it is quite possible and likely that there are members of the Conservative caucus in this Legislature who are concerned about the environment, just as they are concerned about economic development. But concern does not protect wetlands. It's the first step towards

protecting them, but unless you have legislative teeth to enforce that concern, then those wetlands are in danger and all of the species that are dependent on those ecosystems are in danger.

This is not a partisan issue; this is an issue related to environmental controls that goes far beyond this jurisdiction. It's a global problem. But it's a particular problem in southern Ontario because so many of the wetlands have been drained or filled in and we have so few left. This legislation should recognize that and the policy statement should recognize it and ensure that what is left is protected.

We've changed from "consistent with" to "have regard to." I guess some people would think this is just semantics, just words, probably doesn't mean much. As a matter of fact, I've heard some members of the Conservative caucus say that, that the word changes shouldn't be of concern because there still will be protection and that "have regard to" is good enough. If you don't really mean a significant difference, then why are you changing them? If it means about the same thing, why change it? If it ain't broke, why are you fixing it?

I really do believe that it is the responsibility of all members of the House, and the responsibility of all members of society, to do everything they can, in whatever their roles, to protect the environment for future generations. We hear a lot of talk in this House that we've got to do certain things because we don't want to harm future generations; we want to protect the children of tomorrow. I can tell you that young people in our province today, in general, are far further ahead than most adults in terms of their recognition of their responsibility to protect the environment for the future. Perhaps if the rules were different and the pages in this place could speak on this kind of issue, we as members would learn a great deal about our responsibility to protect the environment for future generations.

There have been certain parts of the province where this has been a particular issue. I know that in Grey county, for instance, there have been very many land owners who have raised concerns about regulations that were in place that made it possible for the Ministry of Natural Resources, after doing assessments, to determine that there were certain features that were of scientific interest and should be protected, and that then put limits on what the private land owner could do with that piece of property. I can see why land owners would be very concerned about that.

1640

But all of us recognize that we have, from the Niagara Peninsula right through up to the Bruce Peninsula, a world-class, world-recognized land form, the Niagara Escarpment, and that a previous Conservative government passed legislation to provide protection for the Niagara Escarpment. The same people who argue against the protection that I've been advocating also argue against the Niagara Escarpment Commission and say that it should not be in there, it shouldn't have a say in planning decisions in those municipalities because it limits what a private land owner can do, it adds length to the process and so on.

I'm happy to say that the member for Carleton, when he was minister, established the commission and has been supportive of the commission all along. I'm sure he would agree with me that we should not succumb to demands of municipal leaders or land owners in that area to give controls of development and planning on the escarpment to local municipalities, because that whole escarpment, that whole feature, from one end to the other, has to be planned for and managed as one entity. We can't have different planning rules for one part of it as opposed to another part of it or we will harm the integrity of that very important, internationally recognized land form.

I'm also concerned about the possibility of developments that would lead to significant urban sprawl as a result of this legislation and what that would mean for the future protection of farm lands. I come from a part of the province where we do have farming but we don't have the same heat units, we don't have the same quality of land that we have in southern Ontario. Ironically, some of the best farm lands, prime farm lands, class 1 and 2 farm lands are right beside large urban centres in southern Ontario, and unless we have protections and rules that require approval from the ministry that is responsible for farming and food advising municipal planners on what should be approved or not, we're going to have organizations like the Ontario Federation of Agriculture coming before us and saying: "Look, wait a minute here. We're not giving proper protection to farm land in this province." The Niagara fruit lands are a very good example of that. Significant farming area that is unique in Canada is threatened by urban sprawl, and this legislation is not going to prevent that. As a matter of fact, it's likely to make it probable that we are going to see urban development on those very important fruit lands.

What else does that mean? If we do have urban sprawl, more suburban development, that means extra cost for the taxpayers. My friend across the way was concerned about taxpayers. He should be. But if you have urban sprawl, that means you're going to have services required at much greater distances and much greater cost: water and sewer services, roads, busing, transit, all of these kinds of services which perhaps we could save on if we were to concentrate on infilling and proper planning that would require more concentrated development in urban centres rather than continuing to spread out over farm lands on the suburban fringes. It doesn't make sense to have this kind of development occur, even if the developers like it, if it's going to cost us a lot more to provide the services that those communities are going to require.

One of the ways to have more concentrated development is to deal with the really serious problem of apartments in houses. It's been suggested that our government somehow encouraged the development of basement apartments by the legislation that we introduced. Nothing could be further from the truth. In fact, what we were doing was recognizing the fact that there already were about 100,000 of these apartments in existence and they were illegal. They were illegal because of regulations made at the municipal level, but they were still being developed and there were people living in them and in

many, many cases they were firetraps. There weren't proper exits and it was dangerous for people to be in them. But because they were illegal, we didn't know, the municipalities didn't know, the inspectors didn't know where they were.

At least by making them legal, the tenant would not feel vulnerable in requesting an inspection, the tenant would not be thrown out if he or she went and requested an inspection. I recognize this is a serious problem, the development of illegal apartments. That's why we tried to take some action. You may disagree with the approach we took, that's fine. But tell me what you are going to do to ensure that the people living in these kinds of accommodations are protected, that they are safe, that they have proper fire exits and that more illegal apartments are not going to be developed if municipalities simply prohibit the development of these kinds of accommodations. It's not clear from what this legislation is or from the debates in the committee what you're going to do.

What I said about urban sprawl is supported by the Golden report. The Golden report found that taxpayers in the greater Toronto area could save about \$1 billion a year if the province encouraged more compact urban centres in the GTA and did not allow for urban sprawl out on to the suburban fringe. That's \$1 billion. This is a government that says it wants to save money. They want to cut expenditures. Well, here's a way you could do it.

I will close by simply saying that I really sincerely believe that it is the responsibility of all of us in this House to do what we can to ensure that we do not despoil the environment in such a way that it is going to make it difficult for future generations to live and work and enjoy the wealth of this province. I know that we will have disagreements, political policy disagreements, but I hope that all of us agree on that. If we do, then I want you to tell me how this legislation makes that possible.

How does this legislation protect wetlands? How does this legislation protect the species that are dependent on those wetlands, the wetlands that serve as their habitat? How does this legislation ensure that we will not lose more of that crucial resource in southern Ontario? How does this legislation make it possible for poor people who need accommodation to get it in our urban centres? How does this legislation protect farm land? How does this legislation ensure that we do not have more urban sprawl and the additional costs for services that it entails? How does this legislation ensure that we will not be one large urban centre right across the GTA and southern Ontario in a number of years with no farms, no crops being produced, or very little in small pockets here and there? How does this legislation do that?

If you can tell me how it does, if you can assure me that the policy statements will be stringent and will be adhered to by municipalities, then I can support it. If you can't tell me that, I'm afraid I will have to vote in opposition to this legislation.

Mr David Tilson (Dufferin-Peel): I wanted to comment particularly on the environmental aspects of the comments by my friend the member for Algoma. The purpose of this legislation, as has been stated many times,

was to give some balance to planning in this province. We believed, as many people told you when you were in government, that Bill 163 tipped that balance too far and that in fact Ontario's planning system became tied up with red tape. I know you will say—I expect you will say—“Oh, but now you've tipped it too far,” and you'll mention about wetlands and—I won't repeat your speech, because I've got a minute.

1650

It is not our intention to pave over the province of Ontario. I don't know whether you've read the draft policy statement that was put forward in December 1995, but I'm going to read it to you, if I have time, because it does deal specifically with some of the areas that you're talking about with respect to wetlands.

“Natural heritage features and areas will be protected from incompatible development.

“1. Development and site alteration will not be permitted in significant portions of the habitat of endangered and threatened species, and in significant wetlands south and east of the Canadian Shield.

“2. Development and site alteration may be permitted in fish habitat, in significant wetlands in the Canadian Shield, in significant woodlands south and east of the Canadian Shield, in significant valleylands south and east of the Canadian Shield, in significant wildlife habitat, and in significant areas of natural and scientific interest, if it has been demonstrated that it will not negatively impact the natural features or the ecological functions for which the area is identified.

“Development and site alteration may be permitted on adjacent lands”—and again, the whole emphasis is if, only if, the environment will not be negatively affected. Your line says, “No development at all.” We're saying that's simply not acceptable.

Mr Bradley: One of the things I noted about the speech, one of the remarks that was made which is extremely compelling, was that which made reference to the Niagara Escarpment plan and the fact that what we will likely see is the Niagara Escarpment plan turned over to local municipalities. Mr Tilson, who spoke just now, the member for Dufferin-Peel, is an individual who is supportive of that particular plan.

My concern is this: you cannot give it to municipalities which are losing staff because of the tax cut, and subsequently the cuts that are being made to local municipalities as the province transfers financial responsibility, downloads, to the local municipality. First of all, they won't have the wherewithal to do it; they won't have the appropriate staff to do it. Second, they're much more inclined to grant exemptions to the intent of the Niagara Escarpment plan. There are people who would love to put ski resorts on the escarpment. There are people who would like to have a Holiday Inn up there, I'm sure, and there are lots of rich people who would like to have a lovely house sitting in the middle of the Niagara Escarpment overlooking the Niagara Escarpment.

If you apply it consistently, if you have one body, the Niagara Escarpment Commission, applying consistently the policy of that commission, a policy which evolved from the Honourable Norm Sterling, who was the minister responsible at the time the Niagara Escarpment plan

was established and the commission was established—if only we had that, we would be less inclined to be concerned about this bill.

If you turn that responsibility over to local municipalities, particularly those who are desperate for any kind of development, you're going to find out they're going to grant development, and something which has been recognized around the world is going to be lost to the province of Ontario.

Ms Churley: I'm glad the leader of the NDP caucus was able to take the time today to come and take part in this debate. I remember him well. The member for Algoma has been a very activist environment minister. I know I have learned a lot from him, and his knowledge continues to astound me—not on everything, but particularly around environmental issues.

I want to comment on what was said in response to—perhaps you will say it was just a joke, but I was quite offended by the remark by the member for Brant-Haldimand in response to the member for Algoma talking about how important it is that we don't kill or harm other species on our property. The member for Brant-Haldimand's remark was something like, "Well, they don't pay taxes."

Yesterday the member for Etobicoke-Rexdale, in response to my remarks about this government going backwards in terms of environmental protection—which in fact they are; they're deregulating to an extent that we haven't seen ever. Every other government has added on to environmental protection. These people are taking away from what we put in place over 20, 30 years, right under our noses, mostly in secret. What he said in response to that was, "We should be going backwards."

I know that these comments were made off the record, but I want them on the record, because these are the people who are in power now, who are governing our province. I want to say to the members, don't try to pretend to us that this bill has anything to do with environmental protection. I know that the member for Algoma was perhaps a little softer on that than I and said that if he could be convinced otherwise, fine. I sat on the committee on this. I tried to get the Minister of Environment to come and explain. This bill has nothing to do with the protection of the environment. Let's be honest about this.

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): Two basic comments I'd like to make regarding this bill. One, it's quite evident from our opposition critics that they have very little faith, particularly the speaker from Riverdale and the last government, in terms of having any trust towards local governments. They immediately raise the spectre that most local governments will immediately jump as soon as a developer pops through the door, and we know that if you look at the history of development in Ontario, many, many times, hundreds of times, thousands of times, where the population of a municipality does not want a particular development in its neighbourhood and that council ends up voting for it, it gets taken to the OMB and in many, many instances the council loses out if they were pro-development; and I've seen the reverse.

So to simply state that this particular government as well wants to go backwards on environmental protection—off the record I did not say that. If she would listen carefully, which she seldom does—

Ms Churley: I heard you.

Mr Hastings: You may have heard me but you don't listen when you hear, the member for Riverdale, and that's part of the whole problem with the previous government.

If you take the case of basement apartments, it's a prime illustration of where the municipalities proceeded to make many, many proposals through AMO and not through AMO. If you're going to have basement apartments, they said, "Let's at least have some minimal standards in order to protect single-housing neighbourhoods." Of course, if you look at the record, on parking, on protecting health, safety and fire, they rejected all of them. They simply said, "We'll make basement apartments legal and you'll have to go and get a building permit from the local municipality and everything will be fine." As you know, what we've ended up with is an additional epidemic of these things because of their incompetence in dealing with this issue when they were over here.

Mr Wildman: I want to thank my colleagues for their remarks and their comments.

The member for Dufferin-Peel argued that we should look at the draft policy statements and it would show that the government is intending to protect wetlands. While I might have some disagreements about the draft policy statement, I'll leave that for a moment and just move to the point that the member for Dufferin-Peel did not deal with, and that is the fact that the legislation itself moves from the term "to be consistent with" to "have regard to." So that change in phrase is what worries us. Even if the policy—and we don't know; we don't think the policy statements are going to be strong enough, but even if they were, if municipalities do not have "to be consistent with" those, then they aren't worth much.

I appreciate the comments from the member for St Catharines with regard to the Niagara Escarpment plan. I know of his support and his support for our changes to the plan that made it stronger and I agree with him that it should not be transferred to the local municipalities.

The member for Etobicoke-Rexdale made some comments about this party not having any trust in local governments. I would say that's not the case, but I come from an area where we have very small municipalities. I have a lot of very small municipalities in my constituency and I know that many of those municipal leaders want and need assessment, particularly when they're in a period of cuts and they see the grants from the provincial level of government being cut. If they see someone come to them with a development that is going to significantly increase their assessment and increase their tax revenue, they are tempted to agree and to perhaps avoid looking at all of the aspects for protection.

I think that it is quite true that we're going to have a myriad of increases in OMB hearings as a result of the changes here, and that isn't going to speed anything up.

1700

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): Before I call for further debate on this bill, I'd like to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in his office.

Senior Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Journals (Mr Alex D. McFedries): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour has assented:

Bill 19, An Act to repeal the Advocacy Act, 1992, revise the Consent to Treatment Act, 1992, amend the Substitute Decisions Act, 1992 and amend other Acts in respect of related matters / Projet de loi 19, Loi abrogeant la Loi de 1992 sur l'intervention, révisant la Loi de 1992 sur le consentement au traitement, modifiant la Loi de 1992 sur la prise de décisions au nom d'autrui et modifiant d'autres lois en ce qui concerne des questions connexes;

Bill 32, An Act to fix the Indemnities and Allowances of Members of the Assembly at the Levels in effect on March 31, 1996 / Projet de loi 32, Loi fixant les indemnités et les allocations des députés à l'Assemblée aux niveaux en vigueur le 31 mars 1996;

Bill Pr24, An Act respecting TD Trust Company and Central Guaranty Trust Company;

Bill Pr41, An Act respecting the City of Scarborough;

Bill Pr43, An Act to revive 1092040 Ontario Inc.

LAND USE PLANNING AND PROTECTION ACT, 1995

LOI DE 1995 SUR LA PROTECTION ET L'AMÉNAGEMENT DU TERRITOIRE (continued)

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): It's a pleasure for me to be able to rise and speak on Bill 20. I would certainly like to recognize the Chair, Steve Gilchrist, the parliamentary assistant, Ernie Hardeman, and the Vice-Chair, Barb Fisher, for just an excellent job in guiding us through this particular bill.

Before I get into the debate, I'd like to recognize some of the comments made by the member for Algoma. He referred to the loss of jobs and regulations. I can assure him that the reason for loss of jobs in connection with regulations doesn't have to do with quality regulations and specific regulations that are clear and well-clarified; it has to do with very complicated regulations, regulations that put people through an awful lot of hoops. That drives industry away and yes, those kinds of regulations do in fact cost jobs. This government plans to do something about it.

I was also interested in your comment in relation to the loss of wetlands and how many had been drained. I'm not too sure what part of Ontario you've been looking at, but with the increase in the population of beavers in this province, I see a lot more wetlands than I've ever seen before. I really have to question whether we've been losing that many wetlands, but I appreciate your point. I don't know about the rest of the world, but from what

I've seen around Ontario, the reason amphibians are disappearing has to do more with the increase of blue herons than anything else. They consume a phenomenal number of frogs.

I'm very pleased to speak on this Bill 20. It's a bill that really has a lot of common sense. It's putting local control, empowering the municipalities—which is where I think the power really should be for planning—it's simplifying the approvals and it's speeding up approvals and making them more certain. I'm certainly very pleased to be able to speak and support this particular bill.

I'd like to refer for a few minutes back to the campaign and some of the things that were being said during that campaign. We had land owners, particularly farmers and also developers, extremely angry over Bill 163, the previous planning bill. They were concerned about the wetlands and the adjoining lands to those wetlands and how they had lost either use or potential use of those lands. They were using terms like "expropriation," terms like "confiscation" and terms like "stealing" their land, their rights to use those lands, and they wanted something done about that. This government is doing something about that concern.

They were concerned about the loss of local control, that municipalities should in fact have more responsibility, and we are empowering those municipalities. I believe that that responsibility for planning should be in their hands. This province is providing clear policy statements, statements that do have certainty. I, for one, and I believe most of my party, do have faith in the decisions made by municipal governments.

The public in rural Ontario were very concerned about what they called Toronto-based solutions for rural Ontario. They referred to the fact that the one-size-fits-all and cookie-cutter approach from Toronto from the previous government really isn't working, and they wanted some flexibility to be able to do something about it. They want their wetlands protected, they want their farm lands protected, and this is very credible. I respect it. We had many people coming to the hearings stating how they wanted to see these lands protected.

When I had the opportunity to question, the question I usually asked was, who pays? I think that's a very important question. Who pays? Who's responsible? Is it the land owner? Should the farmer have to pay to protect this wetland for everybody else in Ontario: people from Toronto, people from Windsor? Is it the developer? Is it the municipality? Is it the province? Is it the federal government? I can tell you that the province doesn't have money to be buying these wetlands. Or should it be some of the interest groups, the environmental groups? I don't have the answer, but certainly in none of those presentations made to us did those people have any suggestions as to who should be paying. Until we sort that out, it may be difficult to give really good protection to those wetlands.

My people, my constituents, expressed real concern over the time for approvals of applications. Many have said to me that putting in a subdivision application really wasn't for themselves, it was for their children; others got even more sarcastic and said it was more for their grandchildren. I'm told in 1946 the first Planning Act

came in, that in Ontario we had five planners and it took approximately three weeks to get an approval. Today in 1996 with Bill 163, I'm told we have 10,000 planners and it takes three years to get an approval at the very best. That's hardly progress and being very timely.

I'd like to read a quote from the Oshawa-Durham Home Builders' Association, Feb 22, 1996: "The process was in such dire need of streamlining that our past president pointed out that the Second World War was fought in less time than it takes to run a parcel of land through the approval process of Ontario."

We have streamlined the process. We have developed tight frames. We've cut most of the time frames almost in half. We will no longer be held hostage by delay and indecision.

My constituents also were concerned about the uncertainty and the confusion in dealing with government with Bill 163, and this bill certainly exemplified that confusion. The Ottawa-Carleton Board of Trade had an interesting comment to make about that particular issue. "It was our opinion that Bill 163 is an interesting effort, and it's completely out of control. We have no doubt that the administrators were well-intentioned, but we frankly believe [Bill 163] is a recipe for disaster." That's the Ottawa-Carleton Board of Trade, February 21, 1996.

Bill 163, along with its policy guidelines and implementation guidelines, is too prescriptive—some 600 to 800 pages of implementation guidelines. Many people arrived at our hearings carrying the implementation guidelines still bound in plastic and were extremely frustrated over being laid on with all of this intimate detail.

It even embarrassed Mr Sewell. When he presented to us, he was really concerned. He'd spent some three years, spent millions of dollars and then the government of the day really didn't pay that much attention to his report. They went on and did their own thing. Mr Sewell's comments were: "I know many people have been furious about these 800 pages that have been floating around that are now the implementation guidelines. I agree with them. They're crazy and they're not useful documents." That was February 12, 1996.

1710

There are two items in this bill that I'm very enthused about. The first one is the one-window approach; in other words, the one-stop shopping through the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. They can take their bill in, or take their request in, their application, it will be sent out to other ministries by that ministry, and any appeals will come back through. I'll suggest, I believe, that if the Ontario government cannot sort it out, why should we be asking the public to try to figure out which ministries it should go to? Why should we be asking the developers to figure it out, or some land owner that's never been through this ritual before? Why should he or she have to hire a planner at a lot of money just to sort out an application and try to obtain an approval? In the past when appeals came back, it could come from many ministries and they ended up at Ontario Municipal Board hearings battling it out between various ministries of this government. That is not going to happen in the future. It will be streamlined through the one-window approach.

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario are certainly in support of that: "AMO believes that the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing is the province's lead provincial planning agency, and we do support making it the provincial ministry to file an appeal on a municipal planning decision in those rare circumstances where an appeal is deemed necessary. Therefore we should no longer see several ministries battling it out at the OMB, but rather the province speaking with one voice on a unified issue. The government is to be congratulated for attaining this critical feature." That comes from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, February 15, 1996, and it's really giving us support from all of the municipalities across Ontario.

I'd also like to spend a few minutes discussing moving ahead with the language, stating "having regard for" rather than "being consistent with," and that makes reference to the policy statements. I can assure you that we have strengthened the policy statements in a lot less pages, they will be clear and they will provide certainty to the public of Ontario.

I can assure you that the Minister of Environment and Energy, the Minister of Natural Resources and I are really committed to protecting the environment.

The Association of Rural Property Owners—I'd like to give you a quote from them. These are the people representing rural Ontario: "...wishes to congratulate those responsible for drafting the new policy statement. We think that the designers have incorporated several important features, particularly questions about balancing the pursuit of economic goals and ecological goals; the flexibility in the application of the rules; the autonomy, the responsibility and accountability assigned to municipal authorities; and, above all, the concise way in which all this is packaged—welcome relief." The Association of Rural Property Owners, February 21, 1996.

The rules for environmental protection remain strong, but the implementation of solutions to provide for that protection must occur at the municipal level. This bill gives municipal governments, the development industry and the public the tools to develop plans and policy that guide growth which is sensitive to the environment. Who knows best but those who are directly affected, those who are involved with that aspect of the environment? I say the responsibility should be with the municipal governments. I have great faith in our municipal governments, and many of us serving in this House have worked with municipal governments.

Clearly a position of my minister, and one which I share, is that a healthy economy can and must go hand in hand with a healthy environment. This is the approach which has been taken in this bill. We made our policies less prescriptive, recognizing the diversity and the needs of municipalities so that sound projects can proceed without compromising protection of the environment.

One of the biggest changes arising out of this bill was the return to "have regard for" in reference to the provincial policy. There are those who criticize us for removing the "be consistent with" provision, but I believe the "have regard for" wording has served us well in the past. It was the language that was used from 1983 to 1995, and I

have every confidence that decision-makers and appeal tribunals such as the OMB will take due consideration of our policies and apply them to local circumstances.

I'm also confident that by getting the provincial government out of planning decisions, local citizens and those who are interested in protecting the environment will become more involved and rely less and less on government.

Our member for Riverdale certainly expressed some concerns earlier; however, our member did not go on the road with us. I understand it was for family reasons, and I respect that, but she was only hearing the presentations and the concerns of those people in the Toronto area and some who did represent provincial organizations.

It was refreshing to travel rural Ontario and hear some of the other messages and the other concerns. Our first day on the road was in Sudbury, and environmental issues were hardly ever mentioned. Their concern was to get severances from unorganized municipalities—a very different message we were getting there. We travelled to the smaller community of Cobourg and again there was a different message. But the overall message was not surprising, was what I expected: There was indeed general acceptance for this particular bill.

I would point out there's been some concern expressed that environmentalists and naturalists are not going to like this particular bill. Well, they had a meeting in London, I understand, on the second weekend in March, and this is from the London Free Press: "Environmentalists, Naturalists See Bonus in New Ontario Law." "Volunteer vigilance is what's needed—local citizens who want to protect the land sitting at the table with city councillors and developers," said John Riley, the federation's director of conservation and environment. 'Decisions made with blood, sweat and tears by people who know the region best are the ones that stand the test of time'."

The article winds up: "The Federation of Ontario Naturalists is a non-profit organization whose 15,000 members support pro-environment provincial legislation and policies related to forestry, parks, wildlife and land use planning."

From the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, which represents the farmers from across this province: "To prohibit orderly growth and development in rural communities is to deny those rural communities the opportunity to manage and direct their own destiny, so we are very supportive of the terminology 'shall have regard to' versus 'shall be consistent with'"—OFA, February 26, 1996.

They expressed the desire and the need to have flexibility, because all of Ontario is not the same. Western Ontario is different from eastern Ontario, different from northern Ontario. The opposition will comment, I'm sure, about other local federations expressing concern about this wording. Yes, they did, and they represent their areas, and when those kinds of concerns come up and local municipalities are making a decision, certainly the local municipalities will take that into consideration.

In conclusion, I'm very pleased with this bill, very pleased with the acceptance it has received across this province. It's going to proceed and assist with planning, get jobs in Ontario, opportunities for workers, for youth.

It's going to allow land owners once again to truly own their land and feel like they are the owners of their land. It's going to give some control locally, giving some empowerment to municipalities that have been very frustrated in the past over having so little power to look after planning issues. It's going to reduce the Toronto-based solution for rural Ontario, the one-size-fits-all, cookie-cutter approach. It's going to speed it up, hopefully at least cut it in half. And there will be some certainty in the approval process; it will simplify approvals, it will simplify appeals through the one-window approach. And Bill 20 will bring common sense to environmental protection in the province of Ontario.

1720

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Christopherson: I didn't get an opportunity to listen to all the member's comments, but I certainly heard enough of them to offer up some thoughts.

Indeed I did travel with the honourable member to a number of the locations he mentioned, and let me say that I am as troubled today as I was when we were on the road listening to the public on this bill.

When we talk about "have regard to" and "be consistent with," again we hear one of the buzzwords of this government. I would urge the public to pay close attention when they hear the word "flexibility." Inside that word "flexibility" are all kinds of mischievous things, none of them, in my opinion, at all worthy of being characterized as helping or protecting the environment—in fact, quite the contrary. "Flexible" to this government usually means that those who already have a great deal of influence and power in our society will be given a freer hand to do what they want because ultimately that's going to give this government the economic stimulation it wants—total and complete abandonment of any kind of pretence of truly caring about the environment or worrying about the kinds of jobs they're creating. As I said yesterday: "Whatever kind of job comes along is fine, and if there are no health and safety regulations and decent wages and benefits, well, so be it. It just makes things that much more competitive."

If anybody has a doubt, all they need to do is think about the fact that when this government says it's protecting the environment—God forbid, at one point, he even said they've got policies that are strengthening protection of the environment—think about the fact that this is the government that has said to the conservation authorities of Ontario, "You will be cut by 70% over two years." There's no way common sense says that will protect this environment.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): I just absolutely love it when a member of the New Democratic Party stands in this house and talks about the abandonment of protection. I congratulate our speaker, the member for—

Mr Galt: Northumberland.

Mrs Marland: Northumberland. Thank you. I was going to call him Mr Doug Galt, but I wanted, of course, to refer to him by his riding.

When we talk about a commonsense approach to environmental protection, I am thrilled as the former environment critic for our party for five years in this

Legislature. What I have been ashamed of is the former government's total abandonment of environmental protection. The most classic example I can give you—and that's why it's so interesting today to hear them talk about loss of wetlands. When they approved the building of 130 homes on the Toronto Islands, guess where they approved to have them built? Right in the wetland on the Toronto Islands, and they exempted the whole project from the Planning Act, the Municipal Act and, I would add for the benefit of the members opposite, the conservation act. Every single act that controls development for everybody else in this province was thrown out the window when they wanted to build their homes for their friends on the Toronto Islands.

I will just say in closing that the reason I particularly appreciate the opportunity to commend the member for Northumberland on his comments is the fact that within our family, we have one daughter who happens to be a member of the Canadian Institute of Planners and is also a registered professional planner and is somebody who works in that profession. And yesterday she gave birth to her first son, a brother for her daughter, Rebecca. I use this opportunity to put that on the record.

Mr Sergio: Just to respond to both the two previous speakers, I would like to add on some of the comments which were made by the member for Prescott and Russell, actually, because he has touched on a couple of very important points, and one was discussed at quite some length yesterday, as a matter of fact, with respect to the environment. He says in fact that some of the subdivisions which are being proposed and approved in the small urban communities there, if you will, do not contain enough guidelines with respect to the approval process conditions when it comes to safeguarding the new subdivision from existing farming communities. Of course, we have to take into contrast the situation where you don't have, if you will, the barriers or the distances which may be from industrial to residential or farm land to residential.

That is one area that I don't think much attention has been given to when we speak of the environment. When we speak of the environment, we think of dust, pollution, lakes, rivers, and whatever have you. But let me say that there are a lot of problems with not creating an abatement when it comes to notice from residential subdivisions and other uses such as industrial and farm land, as specified by the member for Prescott and Russell.

The other one, of course, that he did mention quite eloquently was the laws which govern the second unit or basement apartments. I think we have created a particular problem with a large number now, because they've been grandfathered by this particular new law versus the others that won't be created because now the approval has been given back to the local municipality. So that's one area that I want to mention, and I wish had more time to allocate to that.

The Deputy Speaker: Comments and questions? The member for Northumberland has two minutes.

Mr Galt: I certainly enjoyed listening to the various responses, particularly from the member for Hamilton Centre talking about flexibility. I can understand why he

would be concerned about flexibility and the direction that maybe we are going, because that certainly wasn't the experience that we evolved into over the last five years. It was sort of, you might say, their way or the doorway.

There was no choice; it was prescriptive. The local municipalities had no choice, had no way of plugging anything in. They could not look at the local issues. It was just locked in, prescriptive, and there was just no flexibility. That was what was frustrating the people of Ontario, that they were so locked in, that there was no flexibility, there could be no common sense to look at what the local issues were. Back to the Toronto-based solutions; that's where we were coming from for the last five years: Toronto-based solutions, the cookie-cutter approach, the one-size-fits-all to sell across Ontario.

I can tell you it didn't work in Sioux Lookout or it didn't work in Dryden; it didn't work in Timbuctoo. You didn't understand, you didn't appreciate and you didn't recognize their requests and their pleas when they came to you. We went out and there's been all kinds of consultation, particularly with the policy statements. We've spent a lot of time with the public on the consultations today. We've brought in stakeholders.

Mr Christopherson: When? Not public.

Mr Galt: It's obvious that the member for Hamilton Centre just doesn't understand that this has been involved. Maybe he could join with the stakeholders and be part of those presentations and input. Unfortunately, over the last five years, those stakeholders weren't getting that kind of input, and I think it's very important that you go out and you consult and you pay attention to what you're being told. That's certainly what we have been doing as we developed these policy positions.

The Deputy Speaker: Further debate?

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I wasn't going to respond to it. The member for Northumberland I think made a very reasoned and rational speech, but he keeps on repeating this sort of Toronto cookie-cutter approach and almost implying that it's the fault of the people in Toronto that we have planning problems in rural areas, that we in Metro somehow developed these planning processes.

I would like to let the member know that many of us who live in the Metro area have had as much frustration with Queen's Park as you have, and not only with the past government but with other governments. There is no, you might say, guarantee that the people of Ontario condoned everything that came out Queen's Park, whether it be an NDP or Conservative or even a Liberal government.

I think I should put that on the record, that there's no formula or no dictation that comes from the ordinary citizens of the city of Toronto. They certainly feel, in most cases, that they're left out of the process as much as anybody else by forces beyond their control.

1730

I want to refer to an article in today's Globe and Mail that I think really puts this bill in a very good perspective. It's an article by Michael Valpy, and I'll read excerpts from it. I think he really hits zero on a lot of his points.

There's no doubt, as other members have said, and I know the member for Prescott and Russell has said, that there are some positive aspects to this bill. I'm not here to say that every part of the bill should be condemned, but I think what we want to do is ensure that the people of Ontario know how critical the decisions made in drafting this bill are to their future.

The first thing Mr Valpy refers to is that this bill "will ignore," he says, "studies from across North America on the costs of urban and rural sprawl: studies from a dozen US states, from Bank of America, from US municipal bond raters, from the Golden task force on the greater Toronto area and from the seminal Ontario study—now eight years old—on the revenue and expenditure implications of sprawling residential development," and the cost of that.

What I think Valpy is saying, and what a lot of studies have shown, is that one of the long-term costs of not doing good planning is the cost of duplication, that if you don't contain development in the proper urban envelope, what happens is that you have to build more bridges, more roads, more sewers, more schools, more hospitals, when in many cases you already have a developed urban form, or a nodal urban development in smaller towns, where those infrastructure are already in place. Therefore, new developments you put in perhaps in a contained urban form are much more affordable and fiscally responsible than new sprawling developments which can occur throughout very critically important agricultural lands or environmental wetlands or environmentally sensitive lands.

The message is very clear. You may make some money, if you're a small municipality, if you have a development on open green space; the assessment for that municipality will increase. But in the long run that municipality and the province and every taxpayer in Ontario will have to pay for the new sewers, the new highways and all the infrastructure that has to be put in place, not to mention what the cost might be of the removal from the economic stream of agricultural lands or the removal of recreational lands or the impact on environmentally sensitive lands. In fact, I think in the Golden report she mentioned that you could save about \$2 billion a year if you had a contained urban envelope in the GTA, if you didn't allow people to build on all the green spaces from here to North Bay to the north, from here almost beyond Burlington. If you were really interested in saving dollars, you would ensure that there were constraints on development that encroaches on open space.

If you look at Bill 20 and at its sister bill, Bill 26, you'll see that the government we have now in Ontario is going in the other direction. It is basically saying that there's going to be less restrictions on development on marginal agricultural land or open green space. They're going to encourage sprawl; that's what it comes down to. The cost of that to the taxpayers of Ontario is going to be paid for generations to come, because there is space to develop and infill within our cities and towns right now. We should go out of our way even more so than what the existing legislation is to preserve and protect this very sensitive open space.

One of the things that concerns me too is that the name of this bill refers to environmental protection, that it's "An Act to promote economic growth"—and I'll give the government that, that is obviously an intention of this bill, to try to do that. I commend them for trying to do that. But to say that it's also to protect the environment, I think that is a complete misreading of what this bill is all about. There are very few, if any, clauses that protect the environment. In fact, there are very few environmental groups that have supported any of the changes in this bill, because they know that this bill is essentially a bill that encourages development at the cost, at the price of the environment. This is, again, a price that all of us will have to pay, because you cannot replace what you lose in terms of green space and agricultural land; we know that.

The other thing that concerns me too is that in terms of the often-repeated phrase, "We trust in local and small municipalities and municipal government," I think we all have that trust. I know I served on local and regional government for nine years, and certainly we knew, I think, what was best for the people we represented, and that was the intention generally.

The problem is that you've put municipalities in a catch-22 situation. I was going to say catch-26. What you've done is you've cut their subsidies, you've cut the provincial grants by anywhere from 40% to 50%, and they are going to be cash-strapped. Many municipalities, not to say all of them, are going to be starving for assessment. So when development proposals come to them, in order to meet the cry from their residents for services, they are going to do whatever they can to approve developments. I say to you that in some cases these developments will be approved at the price of good development and good environmental and open green space protection. They will do that because they will have no other source of income, because you've cut most of their provincial grants. Maybe not this year but within two or three years from now we will see the price of Bill 20, and we will pay for that encroachment and those bad developments.

It's something that happens in all municipalities. I can remember in our municipality in the city of York there was a development proposal right smack dab in the middle of a park. The city of York has always been assessment-poor because we have very little commercial-industrial. So this developer said, "Hey, we are going to build two huge towers, and you won't pay a cent for them, but we have to build it in your park." Our municipal council agreed to do that, right in the middle of a park, because the municipal councillors were so eager to grab that assessment dollar.

That is the same type of thing that is going to happen down the road, because in essence what you're doing here is you've cut their grants and now you say to them, "Go ahead and find revenue through other sources." That is what, as I say, will happen in certain municipalities. This is the price of Bill 20.

The other interesting things in terms of environmental protection or protection of what's, you might say, beneficial in other areas besides the area of municipal affairs, is that Bill 20 basically says that the only ministry that's

able, essentially, to appeal a decision to the Ontario Municipal Board is one: municipal affairs. That means that the concerns that the Ministry of Environment and Energy have about a development, will not be able to be brought to the table. All other ministries of the government have to listen to and take their guidance from one ministry when there could be a conflict between the two ministries. Natural resources and the Ministry of Agriculture cannot appeal to the Ontario Municipal Board, and I think the centralization of that power into that ministry, giving them sole power to appeal, is not to the benefit of the people of Ontario and those people in Ontario who might be concerned about an agricultural issue, or ministry officials who may be concerned about an agricultural issue, or natural resources and mines especially, and certainly the Ministry of Environment. They should be given a place at the table. This bill takes that away and I think that sets a very dangerous precedent. You're putting too much power into one ministry and in a very sensitive and important area, especially in terms of appeal.

1740

Another area in terms of Bill 20 is that this bill has an almost confusing aspect to it in terms of inner cities especially and the way it treats the ancillary apartments and basement apartments. We've got a government here that sees itself as somewhat of a libertarian, free-market-type government, yet it's going to ask municipalities to set up registries. In every municipality across Ontario they are going to set up registries where they're going to register each house or whatever it is that's got a second unit in it and they're also going to allow the municipalities to charge you for the registry and then possibly charge you for the inspection of that unit.

So they're going to keep this list. I know in the honourable member for Downsview's area it's going to be pretty difficult to determine, for instance, which units should be on a registry and which should not, because there are a lot of homes in North York and the city of York where there is a kitchen and there is a bathroom in the basement and members of the same family use that same unit. Sometimes the grandchildren or the children who are unemployed come back and live in the basement. I'm wondering whether that's going to be in the registry, how they're going to decide which is on the registry, which is not on the registry, and who's going to keep these lists.

I wonder whether the registry is a back-door way of maybe increasing property taxes for these homes that have these units that are registered, whether you're creating a new classification for higher property taxes because you're on this registry. I think it is totally contradictory to all the libertarian sentiment I've heard on the other side, where you're going to ask all these municipalities to register and tell you what you can and cannot do in your own home.

The issue of ancillary apartments or basement apartments is not an easy one. The last government tried to deal with it. It wasn't perfect. You're trying to deal with it. But I tell you, you've got to separate the issue of safety, and certainly we know about that issue and that's a critical one, from the one of what homeowners can do with their properties.

If there's a senior citizen who wants to have part of his or her home rented out because they want to stay in their home and they want to pay the mortgage, the government should not have the right to come in and tell them whether they can rent or not rent and that they have to pay this fee and maybe an extra tax just because they're trying to be independent and stay in their home.

In my area of the city, which is a very old area—I'm talking about Metro as "the city"—there are a lot of seniors like that, who don't ask for any government help but they want the government out of their hair, and this portion of the bill means that they're going to be inspected, they're going to be registered and their taxes could be increased because of this foolish registry system which you're asking all municipalities to do.

I know in my area the free market has worked very well, because you'll find secondary units in moderate, middle-income, working-class areas. They'll have an apartment upstairs, one in the basement, but in the well-to-do areas where people don't need that extra income, you won't find the basement or secondary apartments. So you don't have to tell people where and why and whether you have to be registered or not; it usually takes care of itself. This is overkill. This registry is overkill. It is not necessary and it's something that I think goes contrary to everything you've been espousing on the other side.

Why do you need this registry, especially when, as I said, what it really does is it also cuts down on a lot of potential affordable housing? This affordable housing, which has been in basement apartments or in second-floor flats, has been very beneficial in that it has allowed people to live in areas of cities where there are libraries, there are schools, there is public transit. So they come and live in the area. Rather than asking these people to go and live in Ajax or go and live in Wawa, or whatever it is, they live in the city where the services are already there. That's what these secondary units do. They encourage people to better utilize the infrastructure that's in place. That's why the encouragement of utilizing the residential commodity we already have is very wise from a financial perspective, because the cost, as I said, of pushing seniors, pushing people out beyond the fringe somewhere is a cost that we can't afford. This bill pretends to be one for economic growth; I think that's what their intention was. I do believe that. They were certainly sincere in that approach. They tried to really promulgate and encourage economic growth.

But I tell you one of the things you haven't done if you combine this and what you did in Bill 26: You haven't said that we should be contained in terms of our sprawl. That's not to say you can't build where there are good, buildable lots, do that, but I'm afraid what this is going to do is that in the years to come you're going to see that encroachment on those open spaces. When you do that, as I said, it's not only going to impact on the little agricultural land we've got left, but it's going to impact on the bottom line in this province. That is where in the long run the economic growth this will stimulate will be very short-term in terms of the bottom line and the revenues in this province.

Anyway, that is my main message. Again, I think there are many good things in this bill which deal with trying

to get the thing to be more rational, an approval process. I think you did a credible job in those areas. But as I said, my concern is just in terms of what you're doing about sprawl and containing it. That's why I say to you, Mr Hardeman, that I think it's something you have to work on, because the cost down the road is going to be very great. I hope and I challenge you to meet that point that I made in terms of containing that sprawl for future conservation of our dollars and our open space.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Questions or comments?

Mrs Marland: I'm surprised, actually, to hear the member for Oakwood make the comment that he does about the lack of appeal by other ministries on a plan of subdivision, for example. The fact is, and I would think that having been on council for nine years he would know this process, when a plan of subdivision is referred to the province for the final signature of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, as is presently the requirement, before that happens, every application is circulated throughout all the ministries and all the government agencies. Therefore, if there is a concern by another ministry, it would register that with the minister who has to sign off on those plans of subdivision. Obviously, if there was a concern by the Ministry of Environment or Ministry of Transportation, their comments would be taken into consideration before—they're the same government, these ministries are all within the same government, so obviously there isn't a concern as far as the appeal route is concerned.

1750
The other thing that really concerns me is the fact that you almost support what the previous government did, which was to make basement apartments legal but give no right of entry to inspection by the fire marshal. This bill doesn't do that, but at least this bill makes the registration of ancillary units compulsory. At least we're taking a step in the right direction. I simply say to you, as the member for Oakwood, that if you really feel that you're representing your people, I would think you would be very concerned about people who rent basement apartments or any ancillary apartments without inspections because those are the—

The Speaker: The member's time has expired.

Mrs Caplan: The member for Oakwood raises some very significant flaws in this piece of legislation. He is quite correct that the approach that the government has taken towards second apartments and basement apartments does not lead to greater safety; it leads to greater bureaucracy, greater cost and ultimately, I believe, tax increases.

He's also raised the concern, and I think a legitimate one, that this legislation dilutes environmental protections. But more than that, it has said to municipalities that have had their transfer payments cut by over 40% that they must shorten the time lines for applications, and what that's going to mean is poorer planning at the municipal level. Every municipality, every planner that came before the committee said those time lines were impossible to meet, and so I would say to you that in an environment where you are reducing the resources to municipalities, the member for Oakwood is quite correct: This is not

going to result in better planning. This is not going to result in environmental protection.

The notion of having registration coming from a government that is saying government should get out of your face and have less regulation can only mean that there is a hidden agenda to increase taxes for those people who have a secondary apartment as a part of their home. It does not offer protection. It means higher costs to municipalities. Bill 26 allowed them to levy all kinds of user fees and we know that their agenda is to make people pay more.

The other thing that the member for Oakwood mentioned that I think is a significant concern in this legislation is the fact that the Ministry of Environment and the government have not yet been clear in the establishment of their guidelines. Certainly this legislation is premature, because unless those guidelines are in place—and you have taken away the requirement for municipalities to take into consideration provincial guidelines—you are having a serious impact on planning in this province.

Mr Peter North (Elgin): I just wanted to touch on a couple of issues. I want to tell you that the people I've talked to in Elgin county—and I've talked to a number of them—everyone I've talked to has supported this particular bill.

I wanted to speak to one of the issues that the member for Oakwood talked about, and that's the costs of urban sprawl. I think it's interesting that we hear a lot about the issue of urban sprawl. We hear about it a lot in the country, and people don't always want it to happen, but the fact of the matter is that he was worried about the costs. He said that the people from all over the province would have to pay for those costs. It's interesting to note that when we build SkyDomes and when we build things of that nature, the people from all over the province have to pay for that as well. I just wanted to talk about that.

The second thing that I wanted to talk about was the issue of protecting farm land. I very much appreciate the member's perspective on the issue of protecting farm land. We value the idea that everyone across the province is interested in protecting farm land. The one thing that we feel strongly about is that if you really want to protect farm land, the most viable thing to do is pay what the food that's produced on that farm land is worth. We feel very strongly about that and I think that would lead a great deal to being able to protect farm land.

One of the other things that government can do is discontinue the idea of withdrawing and centralizing all of the services, because it does a lot, in terms of rural Ontario, to be able to maintain a certain level of services and not have them constantly withdrawn.

These areas that we talk about that are significant wetlands and are environmentally significant, it's important I think that we remember that although most of them are not in the city, they are in the country, the people in the country end up maintaining them and we have very little government support to do that. It becomes an extraordinary cost, and if we're not able to gain revenue in some way, shape or form, it will be a burden that we simply will not be able to maintain into the next century. So I hope that—

The Speaker: Time has expired. Any further statements or questions?

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a few more minutes of debate and I believe I'm next in the rotation.

The Speaker: I'm asking for any further statements or questions. If there are not, then the member for Oakwood has two minutes.

Mr Colle: I'm certainly thankful to the member for Elgin for pointing out the critical importance of agricultural land. Those of us who live in the city I think sometimes have as much or greater reverence for that open and good agricultural land that is left in this province, because we know how important it is. When you live in the city and you're cheek to jowl with people and you've got smog and you've got crowded parks, you know how important that is. We certainly treasure the great farm land in Ontario.

I want to say also with conservation areas, and that's what concerns us about this bill, there's a lot of people in my riding. We have the lowest per-capita income in Metro. Those conservation areas are like life and death to us, because most of our people do not have cottages, and so to be able to go to a conservation area in the Niagara Escarpment or whatever is something we treasure. We want to ensure that there isn't a blade of grass touched in our conservation areas, whether it be Black Creek or those other conservation areas. So we want to ensure that. That's why even though we live in the city and we may not understand everything about rural areas, we certainly appreciate them, believe me, because whether it's going for a vacation or the fact of the good vegetables we get on our table, we respect the dignity and the integrity of those agricultural lands.

In response to the honourable member for Mississauga South about appeals, just remember, what it comes down to is, will we know, as members of the public, who appealed or who disagreed with a change made by applications of subdivision? Will we know that? If the Ministry of Environment objected to something, will that be made public or will that be an internal debate between the Ministry of Environment and the Minister of Municipal Affairs? If you wanted to follow through on that, I think those objections—maybe Mr Hardeman might do that. Get them on the table. When natural resources objects, and environment, put them on the table so we can look at them.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): We have some special guests in the Speaker's gallery, the family of Mr Stelling. We have his mom, his sister, his wife and his two sons.

LAND USE PLANNING AND PROTECTION ACT, 1995

LOI DE 1995 SUR LA PROTECTION ET L'AMÉNAGEMENT DU TERRITOIRE (continued)

Mr Hampton: Allow me to say just a few concluding remarks here in the time that is left. It will come as no secret that I am no fan of this bill. I sat for a couple of

weeks on the committee. So allow me to say bluntly what's happening here.

This bill will not protect the environment. What it's designed to do is to allow developers and land speculators to make a quick buck. That's the primary intention. It is designed to clear a path for those in the development industry who put development first and environmental standards much further down on the list. If any environmental protection occurs, it will happen not because of the provisions of this bill but because people will put up a fight in a particular project and tie that project up with objections. In other words, protection of the environment will happen in spite of this bill, certainly not because of it.

We need to look at what's happening in some of the other contexts of this bill. The Ministry of Natural Resources is planning to lay off 1,500 people in that ministry: biologists, foresters, ecologists, water resource specialists. These are the people who ensure that environmental protection happens. These are the people who ensure that good conservation decisions are being made. If these people are not there, and in conjunction with a badly flawed bill, we will not expect much environmental protection.

The Ministry of Environment is expecting similar cutbacks, similar layoffs, with people whose expertise is to make sure wise environmental decisions are made. They will be gone too.

The Ministry of Agriculture is going to slash its budget by \$156 million. The people we will see departing from the Ministry of Agriculture are the people who have some knowledge of rural and agricultural land and how that land ought to be planned for and cared for. So in the context of these cuts, this bill makes even less sense than looking at it at first blush.

1800

Then you have the conservation authorities. Go across Ontario and you know that every conservation authority in the province has had to slash staff over the last six months and will have to slash their staffs even further in the next year. What it means is that another agency that ensures that good conservation decisions are made at the local level, that we try as best we can to make wise environmental decisions, won't be a player in all of this.

So what are we left with? Well, let me quote from the article that did appear in today's *Globe and Mail*, Mr Valpy. He says:

"Who benefits? The development industry—or at least the buccaneer faction of it that doesn't want rules, that wants only anarchy where it can exercise its muscle and throw around its wealth, not caring to whose fingers it sticks."

There is not much logic, especially environmental logic, to this bill. This bill is all about making a quick buck and if the environment happens to suffer in the process, this government really doesn't care.

The Speaker: Is there any further debate? If not, we'll put the question. All those in favour of Bill 20—

Mr Hampton: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'm simply acknowledging that it's 6 of the clock.

The Speaker: I didn't know. Fine, it being past 6 of the clock, pursuant to standing order 34, the motion that this House now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

COMMENTS OF SOLICITOR GENERAL

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member for London Centre has given notice of her dissatisfaction with an answer to her question given by the Attorney General concerning comments made by the Solicitor General. The member has up to five minutes, and the minister or parliamentary assistant will have up to five minutes to reply.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): In starting, I want to apologize to the Sergeant at Arms for keeping him late on his very last day. But this is a matter of principle and I know that the sergeant is a principled person and he will appreciate that this is a necessary question.

The question that I am dissatisfied with was a question to the Attorney General, and I said to him: "I would like to ask you what, in your opinion as the Attorney General of this province, you think is appropriate in terms of comments made by a minister of the crown in the face of a police investigation, a quasi-judicial tribunal or a court? Is it ever appropriate, and if so when, for a minister of the crown to deal with issues publicly that are in front of those bodies?" The Attorney General declined to answer that question. He simply went into his protection of his colleague the Solicitor General.

It is a very cherished principle that the Attorney General acts as an independent person within this place and his responsibility is to maintain the integrity of the administration of justice. Several attorneys general have spoken, either in the House, in front of committee or in other fora, about the importance of this role. Let me quote from Ian Scott in an article in the University of Toronto Law Journal from February 1989. He says:

"An independent Attorney General should bring to policymaking in government a particular concern for principle, for constitutionalism and for rights. The Attorney General has a mandate in government, apart from his prosecutorial role, a mandate to ensure adequate attentions to issues of principle.

"I believe it is the function of an independent Attorney General to bring the focus of justice to questions of politics. I believe it is wrong to imply that issues of principle cannot also be a primary concern of persons in the political process.

"Indeed, my claim is that an Attorney General's special responsibility must be to ensure that issues of principle remain a central concern in policymaking. An Attorney General's role, in other words, is precisely to ensure that democratic decision-making in our community takes into account questions of human rights and constitution."

He goes on to say: "Some observations should be made as we examine the role of the Attorney General in criminal prosecution. We try to keep in mind certain principles as we operate in the litigation context. First, there is the principle of independence from political considerations. Second, there is the importance of assessing what the law, including the Charter of Rights, requires in an individual case. Third, there is the determination of what the public interest requires. I include under this head a consideration of what may be required to maintain confidence in the administration of justice itself."

This goes on for some length and it completes itself by saying later on: "The Attorney General must be guided solely by considerations that are independent of his affiliation with a political party or a government. His decision must be based on his best assessment of what the law and the public confidence in it require. It necessarily follows, from his role as the chief law officer of the state, where that state policy is based on the rule of law, that confidence of the public in the administration of justice prohibits the use of criminal law for partisan purposes."

Howard Hampton, as Attorney General, in talking about a matter of conflict of interest in front of the justice committee, said: "It is a thing that the public expects of members of the Legislature, and certainly members of cabinet and parliamentary assistants, that besides satisfying the conflict of interest act, in all cases we have to be also able to satisfy ourselves. The test will be: What would a reasonable member of the public looking at this situation think, what would they expect and what in the long run will put all of us in good stead with the public?"

I said, in answer to a question in this House on June 14, 1993: "An extremely important principle of our justice system, whether it's before the courts or before licensing bureaus or tribunals, is that there be no political interference with the investigation or the consideration of evidence by those particular bodies from those of us who are elected officials, at whatever level. It is extremely important that when we set up procedures that ensure that due process is followed, no one as a politician be able to interfere in any way. An interference can constitute a discussion of evidence, a discussion of the possibilities of such cases. Certainly it's important for us to understand that the findings of a judge or anyone acting as a judge in a tribunal ought not to be subject to criticism by elected people, because that could infer political interference. So it's extraordinarily important that we, as elected members, maintain the integrity of the system."

What I am asking of the Attorney General is his statement of what he thinks the requirement is.

The Speaker: The Attorney General has up to five minutes for a reply.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): The member continues to refer to litigation, criminal prosecution, and none of that exists, none of that is on the floor, none of that is in front of anyone. To speak of these things—

Mrs Boyd: They are determining whether or not it's going to be.

Hon Mr Harnick: I know these five minutes are for everybody to have their opportunity to say what they believe the essence of the issue is, and I appreciate that the member from London wants to hear this as she shouts at me. But the fact is that there is no litigation, there is no criminal prosecution. What we have is a review of what in fact the law pertaining to this particular issue is. The law is that we have a police complaints commissioner who's charged with dealing with an investigation independently of the facts of what occurred here about two and a half weeks ago in and around the Queen's Park area.

In sum, a fair reading of part VI of the Police Services Act demonstrates that the Legislature intended to invest

the police complaints commissioner and any subsequent hearing conducted by a board of inquiry with the highest degree of institutional independence, particularly from the Solicitor General. The only member of cabinet to whom the police complaints commissioner reports is the Attorney General. And even in the case of the Attorney General, there is no adjudicative role under the act. In all of these circumstances, there exists no reasonable apprehension that any comments made by the Solicitor General could have an inappropriate influence on the course of an investigation of complaints made against members of the OPP. Quite simply, we are dealing here with an investigation, an investigation being done by an independent body, by an independent individual.

We have a section of the Police Services Act that is totally administered by the Attorney General, not the Solicitor General. The Solicitor General has no duties whatsoever under part VI, where it pertains to investigations or hearings. The police complaints commissioner neither reports to nor is otherwise controlled by—in any way, shape or form—the Solicitor General. What we have here is nothing more than an effort to stretch the facts of this situation into something that does not exist.

I tell you, Mr Speaker, I have listened very carefully to the debate as it wound its way through this place in the form of points of order you have ruled on. I listened to that debate very carefully, and what I heard in that

debate from the former Attorney General, one who holds these precepts so dear, in speech after speech after speech from her and from her colleagues, was a complete determination of what the facts on that Monday really were. They knew all the facts, they knew who was to blame, they were pointing fingers.

The one thing they dislike and the one thing that becomes abundantly clear as I listen to this day after day is that they can't take yes for an answer. They're getting a public inquiry, and the government is quite prepared in that public inquiry to allow a complete review of the facts as they pertain to that day, and interestingly enough, the police complaints commissioner is going to investigate any individual complaints that were brought before police forces that were involved on that day. I don't know what more you can ask for. What could be more open? What could be more in line with what an opposition would want? They are getting just that.

I remind the former Attorney General that in order to be in contempt of a particular proceeding, you have to be before a court. We're nowhere near that. It's an investigation.

The Speaker: There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock next Monday.

The House adjourned at 1812.

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| Sault Ste Marie / Sault-Sainte-Marie | Martin, Tony (ND) | York Mills | Turnbull, David (PC) |
| Scarborough-Agincourt | Phillips, Gerry (L) | York-Mackenzie | Klees, Frank (PC) |
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| Scarborough-Ellesmere | Mushinski, Hon / L'hon Marilyn (PC) Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs | York South / -Sud | Vacant |

A list arranged by members' surnames and including all responsibilities of each member appears in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month.

Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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No. 50

N° 50

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Monday 1 April 1996

Lundi 1^{er} avril 1996



Speaker
Honourable Allan K. McLean

Président
L'honorable Allan K. McLean

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 1 April 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 1^{er} avril 1996

*The House met at 1332.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MARILYN BODOGH

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): All of St Catharines, Ontario and Canada are hailing the victory of Marilyn Bodogh and her successful rink at the world curling championships at Copps Coliseum in Hamilton this past weekend.

When Marilyn and teammates Kim Gellard, Corie Beveridge and Jane Hooper Perroud took the provincial crown, the people of St Catharines, Toronto and Brampton were extremely happy and proud. When the Bodogh rink was the Canadian champion in Fort William, people from across Ontario were delighted. When the world women's final finished with the Bodogh rink claiming victory for Canada, the whole nation was ecstatic.

The St Catharines Curling Club on Grantham Avenue in St Catharines has its very own world champion in the person of Marilyn Bodogh who, 10 years after her world championship victory in 1986, has returned with new teammates to bring glory and positive attention to a community which has experienced its share of hard knocks over the past few years.

Perhaps the St Catharines Standard said it best in its editorial today, "Bodogh's second world title is a tribute to persistence and hard work in a sport which offers little in monetary reward and drew limited public attention until Bodogh, sister Christine Jurgenson and teammates Jan Augustyn and Kathy McEdwards shook up the staid Canadian women's curling world 10 years ago with their exuberance."

Congratulations to Marilyn and her new rink.

SPENDING REDUCTIONS

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): Last week I commented on the rush to the right that seems to be taking hold more and more within the Conservative caucus, and today we see another sign of that, as the Toronto Sun reports, "Young Tories Start Shift to Reform." I think the Conservatives are discovering that they are acting, at least here in Ontario, more and more like Reform and the only thing that's left for them is to change their name.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Reform-a-Tory.

Mr Silipo: That's right, to change their name. But this great move towards the right, this lean and mean attitude we are seeing, is not limited to what Mike Harris is doing

here in Ontario, because today marks also the beginning of something called the Canada health and social transfer. And what do we see there? We see the Liberal government carrying on a great tradition started by the previous Mulroney regime, of cutting transfers to the provinces and saying they're balancing their budget simply by slashing funding for education, for social services, for health care. That, it seems, is becoming more the direction.

We saw it again the other day when the Minister of Education and Training announced in this House the absurd position of now asking property taxpayers in Ottawa and Toronto today, and maybe in Hamilton next year, to take money and send it back to him so he can pay for the 30% tax cut he wants to give to his rich friends. That is the future of—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member's time has expired.

ONTARIO STREET BAPTIST CHURCH

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): I rise today to congratulate the members of Ontario Street Baptist Church in Stratford. During this time of fiscal restraint, the members of this fine Stratford congregation have rallied together to provide a lift, similar to an elevator, for handicapped members of the church who found climbing the stairs difficult, if not prohibitive.

The lift was originally estimated to cost in the range of \$75,000, but thanks to various members of the congregation who donated a total of approximately 800 hours of labour, the cost was kept down significantly to a total of \$55,000.

This is an excellent example of how the people of Perth work together to provide within their communities. All the money was raised in just under two years, through donations and the church's annual rummage sales. No government money was used. As a matter of fact, the congregation even turned down an available provincial grant, preferring to raise the money itself.

Once again I stand in the House to applaud yet another example of how the people of the great riding of Perth are working together to improve Ontario.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I rise to speak on the impact of the education cuts on school boards in Hamilton and Hamilton-Wentworth.

We all remember the promise made in the Common Sense Revolution by Mike Harris that "Classroom funding will be guaranteed." The PC response to an ARCH TYPE magazine questionnaire in 1995 was, "We have

stated that any funding cuts to education will not come from the classroom." That is clearly another broken promise, another betrayal.

The Harris government's cuts will jeopardize Hamilton schools and the quality of education in Hamilton schools. It's going to jeopardize our children's future and represents clearly another broken promise. Mike Harris is stealing our children's future to fund a tax cut for the rich across Ontario.

The Premier was clear when he promised that classroom funding would be guaranteed. Well, he can tell that to the people of Hamilton-Wentworth, who saw a cut of \$25.4 million in our educational system, a layoff of well over 1,000 employees and over 500 teachers in Hamilton-Wentworth. This includes, in the Hamilton board alone, 228 elementary teachers and 209 secondary teachers. This is not supposed to impact on the classroom?

This has all been done to finance a tax cut for their wealthy friends. This government is willing to sacrifice our children's education, to sacrifice the future of education in Ontario to give their rich friends across this province a tax break. I hope they're ashamed of themselves. They're going to pay the price for this in four years.

CONGRATULATORY MESSAGES

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): Two statements, and I trust Hansard's going to document them appropriately.

First, congratulations to the women and men of OPSEU, who won, who won handily. When they win, the people of Ontario win. Thanks and gratitude to them.

Second in the same statement, congratulations to the Loblaw's Five, all members of the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty who tried to utilize the advice of the Minister of Community and Social Services to haggle with their greengrocer. And what happened? They got busted and thrown into the slammer. Their charges were stayed today. Justice prevailed.

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I was honoured yesterday to meet with the Slovak Minister of Environment, Jozef Zlocha. Jozef Zlocha was travelling throughout Canada, along with a contingent of leading members of the Slovak Republic and leading business people, investigating environmental alternatives and indeed prepared to share them with us. Branislav Galat, who is the president of the Canadian Slovak League, Branch 23, arranged for them to be hosted in Welland. I was proud to attend and speak with Mr Zlocha and his associates about some very common issues.

It's time, though, to point out that eastern Europe is eager to initiate trade with Ontario. I submit to you that this government would be well directed if they were to consider Bratislava, for instance, as a location for an Ontario trade location so that we could initiate this important and productive process.

CHRISTINE ICHIM

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): I'd like to draw your attention to the gallery, to a young lady by the name of Christine Ichim. It is with great pride that I stand here to acknowledge a courageous young lady from Kitchener.

She is 18 years old, but with a maturity well beyond her years. She has decided to spend her summer in-line skating across Canada to raise \$5 million for leukaemia research.

Christine's mother has been battling leukaemia for eight years, and Christine, along with her brother Thomas, has been very active in dealing with the situation head on. Their concern for their mother was the motivation behind a gold medal performance at a 1994 Canada-wide science fair. Now their attention has been focused on a 104-day in-line skate across the country.

Christine, like Terry Fox and Rick Hansen before her, is driven by a certain vision and possesses the determination to realize that vision. These are precisely the qualities that make her a role model for others and this is why she deserves our support.

I know I join all members of the Legislature in wishing Christine the best of luck this summer and hope that her dream becomes a reality, both for her mother and for all those afflicted by this illness.

GOVERNMENT POLICY

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): Today is the day Conservatives celebrate. Today's is April Fool's Day, and fooling people is something the Conservatives do very well. They fooled people during the election when they said it was possible to cut \$5 billion, balance the budget and not touch one penny from health care, classroom education or law enforcement, and they are still trying to fool people today.

Let's take the finance minister, for example. He thinks he can fool people into believing his \$5-billion tax cut has nothing to do with the daily flood of pink slips being issued across this province. Let me tell you something, Mr Speaker: When the finance minister said, "We are not laying off thousands of people to pay for a tax cut," he didn't fool anybody.

He didn't fool the 200 people losing their jobs at the Peel Memorial Hospital; he didn't fool the 559 people, mostly teachers, losing their jobs at the Lincoln and Niagara South school boards; he didn't fool the 418 people, again mostly teachers, receiving layoff notices from the York Region Catholic school board; and he certainly didn't fool the up to 27,000 public servants whom the Conservatives are planning to lay off.

Unfortunately, the pain and hardship caused by this government is not practical, it is no joke and it begs the question, who are the real fools in all this?

DRYDEN BOARD OF EDUCATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): The Dryden Board of Education is one of the revenue-poor boards of education in the province. This past week it received news that the Harris Conservative government was cutting its budget by \$1.25 million in 1996, with further reductions in 1997. The Harris Conservative government says, "These cuts won't affect students and won't affect classrooms."

But let's look at what is being cut: the full budget allocation for elementary and secondary sports activities; the budget allocation for the cultural events that enrich

daily student life; cutting the budget for grades 7 and 8 technology and design programs; doing away with library technician programs, the very people who help children develop their interest in reading and create a reading environment in our schools.

What does this say about this government? It says very plainly: This government doesn't understand that programs like cultural activities, like the reading program, like the technology program, like sports and athletic events make schools alive. They make schools interesting places for children; they make the school something that a child looks forward to every day and wants to attend. They broaden the school experience so that all children find something in school and all children are able to achieve. What is happening is that those very programs that make schools interesting for children are disappearing from our schools, and our children will indeed be affected.

SOHEIL MOSUN LTD

Mr Douglas B. Ford (Etobicoke-Humber): Last week I had the pleasure of visiting an Etobicoke-based business that is an excellent example of a company thriving in the current economy. The proprietor is Soheil Mosun and his company, Soheil Mosun Ltd, manufactures bronze and steel architectural products for commercial buildings around the world. I was given a tour of their impressive facility.

The company's finely crafted work has been in shrines and office towers around the world, but they also have the honour of supplying the Genie, Gemini and Much-Music video awards to outstanding Canadian artists. In addition, the company has made a significant contribution to the wellbeing of another national icon. Soheil Mosun Ltd is producing bronze frames that will be located on the observation deck of the Peace Tower in Ottawa, which is currently being renovated.

Not surprisingly, the company recognizes that the opportunities are not limited to our nation's geography. Soheil Mosun himself recently accompanied the Premier on a Team Canada trip to Asia, where the company signed a joint agreement to share its expertise in Malaysia. People in the Far East now will have the pleasure of witnessing the products for which Soheil Mosun Ltd has become respected.

I am pleased to speak of Soheil Mosun Ltd and the successes it has achieved. I am confident there will be other similar success stories as this government continues to get Ontario back into shape.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

FAMILY SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Community and Social Services): I want to inform the members of the Legislature of another step taken by this government to protect Ontario's welfare system for those most in need. I would like to announce to the House a joint

initiative with the federal Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Lucienne Robillard. This initiative will reform Canada's family sponsorship program.

As members of this House will know, under Canada's family class immigration program, residents are able to sponsor family members who wish to immigrate to Canada. Individuals who agree to sponsor family members are financially responsible for them. When a sponsorship breaks down, family members are forced to rely on the province's welfare system. An estimated 30,000 sponsored immigrants are relying on social assistance in Ontario today.

Working with the federal government, we have achieved an agreement on a regulation change that will result in sponsors being held more responsible and more accountable. It will also provide Ontario with another tool to protect the welfare system.

Our government believes sponsors must live up to their obligations. As a result of these changes, the federal government will be able to go to court and seek to recover welfare payments on behalf of the province. Some cases may not be appropriate for legal action, such as abusive relationships. People who really need our help will not be affected by these changes.

Our government is committed to protecting the welfare system for those who truly need it. This initiative is just one more example of our ongoing efforts to keep that commitment.

SALARY DISCLOSURE

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): I rise today to table information made public for the first time under the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act. This marks a major step forward in improving the openness and accountability of the provincial government and the organizations it funds.

This government promised in the Common Sense Revolution plan that we would give taxpayers the information they are entitled to about compensation of the most senior people in the public sector.

The Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act, also referred to as the sunshine law because of the light it casts on information that was previously shrouded in unnecessary secrecy, was one of our priorities as a new government. Under this legislation, public sector organizations and government ministries must, by March 31 of each year, disclose the names, positions and compensation paid to employees whose salary was \$100,000 or more in the previous calendar year. By setting a threshold of \$100,000 in salary for public disclosure, the legislation parallels similar requirements in the private sector.

1350

This gives a much better picture of how an organization's priorities and performance, and the responsibilities of a position, stack up against compensation levels for senior people. It returns meaning to the word "public" in public sector salaries. Greater accountability in public sector salary disclosure is also in line with the recommendations of Ontario's Information and Privacy Commissioner.

Organizations subject to the legislation include municipalities, school boards, hospitals, colleges and universities, all ministries of the Ontario government, the Legislative Assembly, provincial crown corporations and agencies such as Ontario Hydro, the Liquor Control Board of Ontario and the Workers' Compensation Board. It applies to any organization that receives transfer payments from the province of at least \$1 million, or 10% of its gross revenues if that amount is \$120,000 or more on an annualized basis.

Today, the information on compensation for the 1995 calendar year is being made available. In the spirit of openness and accountability that underlies the legislation, this information is being made available today to the Legislature and to the public. The data being released today include information on the health, municipal and educational sectors, as well as all government ministries and agencies.

Members will note that the document released today does not include the salaries of any MPPs or ministers, even though members of the assembly are subject to the legislation. This is because in 1995 no member of the House received a salary of \$100,000 or more.

The reason for this is that the numbers reported today are taken from T4 records prepared for Revenue Canada and do not include the hidden tax-free allowances that members receive. Taking into account the tax-free allowances, the pension plan and other benefits, the Premier's total compensation is estimated to be the equivalent of \$166,443, according to the Brown commission, which recently prepared a report on MPP compensation entitled *Setting the Benchmark*. On the same basis, the compensation of a minister of the crown was estimated to be the equivalent of \$132,341, and a member's was the equivalent of \$93,389.

Members are aware that last week the Legislature passed a bill that freezes members' indemnities and allowances at levels in place on March 31 of this year, the same levels they have been at since 1993. This bill prevented reinstatement of the 5.5% by which allowances and indemnities had been reduced because of the social contract, which expires today.

Individuals in all segments of society are doing their part to address the province's fiscal situation. We believe members have a responsibility as well. To that end, we are committed to ending the gold-plated pension plan and tax-free allowances for members, and that is exactly what we will be doing in the very near future.

We have made a commitment to the people of Ontario to take a more open and accountable approach to government, and this is just another step in the process of being more responsible to all Ontarians.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE SETTLEMENT

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): I am pleased to be able to report to the House that the public service strike is over and that the government was able to end the strike through the free collective bargaining process.

Yesterday, both the union and the government ratified a new collective agreement, the first ever negotiated in a

right-to-strike environment in the Ontario public service. The agreement is fair and reasonable to both the members of OPSEU and the taxpayers of Ontario, who have to pay the bills.

We expect a speedy reintegration of employees into the workplace, both those who exercised their right to come to work and those who exercised their right to strike. However, I will re-emphasize that this government will not tolerate under any circumstances harassment or intimidation of employees who exercised their right to come to work.

When the strike started more than one month ago, the government had a fair and reasonable offer on the table which would have cost between \$150 million to \$200 million to implement, while the union was demanding a contract which would have cost the taxpayers of Ontario more than \$1.5 billion. I'm happy to report that the government was able to keep the cost of the final agreement well within the \$150-million to \$200-million range, making the taxpayers of Ontario the big winners today.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member for Welland-Thorold is out of order.

Hon David Johnson: Moreover, the contract we negotiated provides the government with the wage stability and the management flexibility it needs to implement its restructuring agenda in a cost-effective and timely manner.

Some of the key features of the package include:

There will be no increase in base wage rates for the term of the contract through to December 31, 1998.

There is no cost-of-living clause.

The job offer guarantee has been eliminated.

More restricted bumping rights are in force. Before there were unlimited bumping right provisions; now there are only three bumps allowed. Previously the bump could be exercised at the end of the notice period; now it will have to be exercised in the first two weeks of the notice period.

Notice periods have been reduced from up to 11 months to a standard of six months.

Also, despite speculation to the contrary, the contract does not include a successor rights provision. Rather, it commits the employer to make a reasonable effort to ensure that the employee follows the job in the case where work done by the public sector is taken over by a new employer.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate members of the government's negotiating team, in particular Mr Angelo Pesce, Mr Kevin Wilson and Mr Doug Gray, who did a superb job and achieved a very positive result for both the employer and the people of this province.

Also, I must, on behalf of the government, thank the public service managers, the thousands of people who exercised their right to work and the members of the other OPS unions for their dedication and efforts during the past five weeks. While it was not business as usual, they were able to keep the province running and working.

Now that the strike is behind us, the government will move quickly to implement its commitment to restructure the public service and to deliver better services at lower

costs. It is my hope and belief that all our employees will participate in that effort and that all employees will, as they have in the past, place first priority on serving the people of Ontario.

FAMILY SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I guess what the minister announced today is the reannouncement of a November 11 announcement regarding the crackdown on immigration fraud and to crack down on people who don't live up to those commitments. What the minister hasn't spoken about today of course, though, has been the total mismanagement of the welfare system during the strike by this government, a strike that was forced by the government, a strike that the government brought on the people of Ontario and, being ill prepared for it, caused total chaos in the social services system.

This government allowed thousands of cheques to go out to people who should not have received them. This government allowed thousands of cheques to go out to people who were being investigated for fraud. This government allowed cheques to go out to people who were in jail during the strike, because of its mismanagement. This government allowed deadbeat dads to get away with payments during the strike. This government allowed STEP, the supports to employment program, to fall into total chaos during the strike so people who were working often received gross underpayments or, in some cases where people had stopped working, gross overpayments by this government.

These were the initiatives that this government was not prepared to undertake and these were the glaring weaknesses in a government that forced a strike upon the people of Ontario and then ensured that people on welfare who should not have received cheques continued to receive them despite all its talk about welfare fraud. This is the government that has not moved on mandatory direct deposits, as we urged them to, has not allowed government access to income tax information and some of the real initiatives that will help crack down on welfare.

What I say to the minister and to this government is, if you want to take care of welfare problems in Ontario, do what you promised to do: Create the jobs so these people can get off welfare and get into the workforce.

1400

SALARY DISCLOSURE

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): We in the Liberal caucus welcome the Minister of Finance's tabling of the salary information. It is a useful process for the province. It's fair to say that in every case there is a public body that has set these salaries. I think the public will find it helpful to know the salaries and, where they may have some problems with it, to discuss that with the public body. So we certainly find that a useful process.

I wanted to say, though, that I find it a bit of a double standard when the government talks about a sunshine law, it talks about making the finances of this province more open and accountable, and this is the same government that, the public should be aware, refused to table a budget—the first time in the history of the province of

Ontario we have not had a budget tabled in this Legislature. It is the same government that has given private, confidential information to credit rating agencies and refused to give that information publicly. It is the same government that, in what we call pre-budget hearings, refused to give us information that had been provided to every single pre-budget hearing for the last 15 years. So I find that we have a double standard here. You want a sunshine law, you want more open and accountable finances, and we have never run into a government more secretive, more closed about the legitimate information the public deserves.

I think it's time you looked in the mirror and passed a sunshine law that required you to provide the necessary data for the public of Ontario to understand where you are in the finances of the province.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE SETTLEMENT

Mr Joseph Cordiano (Lawrence): We are all glad, of course, to see that the government was able to end the strike through the free collective bargaining process, but let's be very clear: This government intentionally prolonged the strike for its own political ends. That is very clear to the people of this province. Let's also be clear, I might add, that this government failed in its objectives to break the union—miserably failed. As well, this strike demonstrated the absolute futility of your ideologically driven feeding frenzy to try and divide and conquer the people of this province. The people of this province will not be divided; they will not be conquered by your efforts at doing so. It's very clear that the people of this province have a great deal more to say to this government about its efforts to divide, its efforts to pit one group against another. They will not allow for that.

It is very clear to the people of this province as well that this government's every effort to continue to practise those kinds of politics will be proved to be futile in the future. Time and again the people have spoken very clearly. This government has to get on with its economic agenda to make it meaningful, to create jobs, to bring people together in this province, not to pit them one against the other, to divide and conquer. It is very clear the people reject that.

FAMILY SPONSORSHIP PROGRAM

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): Obviously, our caucus supports the agreement that has been achieved between the province and the federal government with respect to sponsorships. This is something that was well under way in the negotiations when the current government took office. But rather than talking about the whole concept of fraud, I would like to ask the minister when he is going to get around to doing something in a positive way about the social assistance system in this province.

The only thing this government has done to date is to attack the poorest people in this province. Whether it's the rate cuts that were announced shortly after this government took office, whether it's the so-called eligibility restrictions that the government has put in place, whether it's the attacks on the disabled—and we'll hear more about that soon from this government—whether it's the

Ontario drug benefit copayments and the attack on welfare recipients under that program, or whether it's the housing cuts, everything this government has done and everything this minister has done is to say that welfare recipients are lazy and that they should be attacked.

We know that's not true. We know that the majority of people on social assistance in this province are children. They need the assistance of this government. Any money that is spent is an investment in the future. Our caucus continues to believe that this government is shameful in the way it's attacking the poorest citizens and the poorest children in this province.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE SETTLEMENT

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): In response to the statement by the Chair of Management Board, I'd like to say a couple of things: Number one, I'd like to offer my congratulations to OPSEU; number two, I'd warn the general public out there not to get too complacent. The onslaught has just begun.

Leah and all the members of OPSEU, you did good. You got in the ring with Captain America and you went the distance. You went toe to toe with the bully and you scored a victory for all of us, particularly for the labour movement. This was not Ronald Reagan and the air traffic controllers. You won. You were solid, you were focused and you won, and it was a win for all those men and women out there who will be empowered by your show of resolve and the gains you made.

Many thought you couldn't do it, you wouldn't last, but you did. And so the poor and women and children and the disabled and health care workers and social workers, citizens across this province, today feel more empowered, feel less overwhelmed and despairing than they did, and we thank you for that.

It is important to note, however, that this is just the beginning. The onslaught on jobs and services continues, and we must be vigilant. We must continue to challenge and to resist.

I remind the government of the 20,000 people who showed up in London on the coldest day of the winter, the 50,000 who gathered at Queen's Park in January and the up to 120,000 who gathered in Hamilton. The snowball is rolling. We do not agree with your slashing jobs and services to give the rich a tax break.

Who will ever forget the images of the 1996 OPSEU strike? Secretaries, social workers, snowplow operators, forestry technicians surrounding government buildings; our friends and neighbours gathered around bonfires in barrels singing and huddling in their parkas to keep warm; and the storm troopers, the bloody confrontations and the steely resolve, and all for the sake of justice and fairness. Just by being there, OPSEU, by going the distance, by continually acting in good faith you set an example, you gained for yourself and you gave all of us a new respect for compassion and caring.

It's okay, you said, to care about people and to put people first, and you won for us the right to do that too.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order. The member for London North is out of order.

ORAL QUESTIONS

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): In the absence of the Solicitor General, my first question is for the Deputy Premier. Minister, there were some very disturbing revelations made in the news media this weekend about the police handling of the situation at Ipperwash Provincial Park last September 6, which as we all know sadly resulted in a man's death.

The chief superintendent of the OPP now acknowledges that the police made a conscious decision to use massive force to confront an unarmed group of people at Ipperwash, and this force included the use of snipers and the OPP riot squad.

This is disturbing in part because this new information appears to contradict statements that were put out both by the OPP and by the government at the time of the shooting occurrence. The Premier's press secretary has said that there were ongoing meetings among government officials here at Queen's Park to discuss the situation at Ipperwash prior to this massive use of force.

I ask you, Deputy Premier, if you can tell us who in the government was participating in those meetings, who in the government was then aware of the decision, the deliberate decision, to use massive force at Ipperwash, and did your government concur with that decision?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): I have absolutely no knowledge of these events, and I would refer this question, in the absence of the Solicitor General, to the Attorney General.

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): I would like to advise this House that the issue that the Leader of the Opposition brings up today is an issue that is presently being investigated by the special investigations unit. As well, I would like to advise the Leader of the Opposition that there is a civil action pending, and as well, there have been criminal charges that have been laid as a result of this. So any comment would be inappropriate at this time.

I also point out to the Leader of the Opposition that I believe it's Chief Superintendent Coles, who was in charge of the southwest region of the Ontario Provincial Police, indicates quite simply this was a police matter, not a political matter, and there was no political interference.

1410

Mrs McLeod: With all due respect to the Attorney General, first of all, you raise an issue I am not raising today. I believe my issue is a separate issue and I believe it deserves a direct response from you. I'm well aware that the special investigations unit is investigating the circumstances surrounding the death and will render an opinion in that regard fairly shortly.

The issue I'm raising is the issue of a deliberate decision to use force to confront the people who were occupying Ipperwash Provincial Park. I'm also aware of what was said, that it was a police action, not a political action. My question related to the fact that there were meetings being held, that it was a tense situation, that the

Premier was being questioned daily. We are given to believe he was being advised, on a regular basis, of actions being taken. It seems reasonable to suppose he was advised of this decision to take action and therefore would have been in a position to either concur or not concur, or to ask his Solicitor General to investigate it.

I think they are legitimate questions, Minister. I can tell you that I believe they are also legitimate in the context of the decisions that were made by your government in response to our concerns with the use of this particular unit in dealing with the picketers outside the Legislature. I am truly concerned about what appears to be a pattern in the use of this particular OPP unit, first at Ipperwash and then at the Legislature, when in both cases there appears to have been a decision to use force out of all proportion to the situation.

So I ask you, Minister, to deal with the issue I raise today, which is not the investigation being carried out by the special investigations unit, but given the new information from the chief superintendent of the OPP, the deliberate decision to use force in a confrontation, would you not agree that the actions of the police at Ipperwash should be examined as part of the public inquiry into the OPP's conduct on March 19?

Hon Mr Harnick: I can only say that any political interference in the operations of the OPP would be highly inappropriate. There was no political interference. The police made decisions as a police force and acted in accordance with the decisions they made, and that is very clear.

Mrs McLeod: I say again, my question was about awareness on the part of the Premier and members of the government. While the Attorney General may wish to dismiss this as a question about political interference, I have to remind him that the Solicitor General is responsible for the Ontario Provincial Police. You simply cannot avoid that reality. That means the Solicitor General and the Premier are undoubtedly privy to information and could be in a position of concurring with this decision or questioning it before it occurred.

I also want to remind you, Minister, that we have the OPP this weekend acknowledging that it fully intended to use force to confront, and that's the word that was used, "confront," an unarmed group of people at Ipperwash. As a result of a confrontation then that was deliberately sought, we've seen the outcome, unfortunately, of someone being killed.

I do understand that's being investigated by the special investigations unit, but Minister, we are in agreement that there will be a public inquiry to look at the use of the OPP squad, what we believe to be excessive force, on March 19. I believe the decision to use this unit in Ipperwash, questions about the way in which they're deployed, the way in which this unit is trained, the instructions they're given to deal with these very sensitive situations, are a legitimate part of the public inquiry, whether it is dealing with Ipperwash or March 19. I have to ask you why the government is willing to look at the actions of the OPP riot squad here in Toronto but appears to be unwilling to look at the actions of that same squad in the Ipperwash situation.

Hon Mr Harnick: I think the situations are very different. Again I reiterate that we already have criminal charges laid surrounding the Ipperwash situation. We also have an investigation ongoing by the special investigations unit. Finally, we have a civil action for which we have received notice, and that in and of itself distinguishes the situation as between Ipperwash and the other issue to which the Leader of the Opposition refers.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): New question, the leader of the official opposition.

Mrs McLeod: I will place a new question, although sadly, I believe this is an issue the government will not be able to avoid so easily.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): I will place my second question to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. This year, once again, we are seeing young people in this province facing staggering levels of unemployment. In fact, most people would agree that close to 30% of our young people are unemployed and that unemployment—and this is alarming, Minister—among our college and university graduates may be higher than it has ever been.

We know that those same university and college students are starting to write final exams. They're already in the full swing of searching for jobs. They're hoping to find a summer job or to find their first job and yet we've had absolutely no announcement from your government as to any kind of jobs programs to help them.

I ask you today, Minister, do you have any plans to introduce a program that will help young people? Will you provide any hope that your government is prepared to help them even a little?

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): To the Leader of the Opposition, I'd like to correct one statement that you made. The youth unemployment figure in Ontario is not 30%, as you said; it is 16%. I know that's high, but it's wrong and I think you should check your figures.

Also, our government is concerned about employment for young people and I'm very happy, as we have mentioned in the last week or so, that the statistics of employment in February were 31,000 new jobs created, which are the most jobs created in the month of February since 1981. This carries over to jobs for young people as well. As far as I'm concerned, our policies will benefit our young people, and I'm sure that if the Leader of the Opposition would look and consider, she'd feel the same.

Mrs McLeod: Since the minister sees fit to correct my statements, let me correct the minister's statements. First of all, those are not employment statistics you just offered to this House, Minister; those were jobs numbers. The employment statistics will show you that there were 7,000 more people not working last month. That means the unemployment levels were slightly higher, Minister, not slightly lower, and higher by some 7,000 additional people. That's why your statistics about the 16% unemployment level for young people are different from the real unemployment level for young people, because the

real unemployment level, people will agree, is closer to 30%. Because young people don't expect to find a job, they're not out there looking for jobs. The 16% is only those people who are out there day after day trying to find employment and not finding employment, and that's why we're concerned and that's why we will keep raising this question.

Last week, Minister, when my critic raised the question with you, you said that freezing the minimum wage was your answer for job creation programs for young people. Well, I have to suggest to you again, to correct your statement of last week, that that is not a jobs program. You suggested to us last week that people like the northern Ontario tourist outfitters welcomed the minimum wage freeze, and I'm sure they did. But they didn't give you any indication that they're going to create more jobs as a result of it. In fact, our critic, since you made that statement, has asked many people whether or not the freeze on minimum wage is going to lead to new jobs being created. So far, nobody's been able to say it will.

So I ask you, Minister, has anyone told you that they're actually going to hire more young people as a result of your wage freeze? Do you have any evidence at all that your wage freeze is going to cause employers to hire more people this summer? If you have no evidence that it will, what other steps are you prepared to take to make sure there is some opportunity, some help for young people facing record levels of unemployment?

Hon Mr Saunderson: Again to the Leader of the Opposition, I'd like to tell her that I have been told that the freezing of the minimum wage is very helpful to the small business people whom you referred to.

Mrs Sandra Papatello (Windsor-Sandwich): We're talking about youth employment.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member for Windsor-Sandwich.

Hon Mr Saunderson: However, if I can proceed here, I would like to let you know that the ventures program is being reviewed, as part of government reviews being made for all programs, and I'm sure that we will be able to make an announcement in the near future that will be very helpful to students.

Mrs McLeod: If we can move the minister away from his wishful thinking that freezing the minimum wage is magically going to lead to jobs, he does begin to get at the nub of the question, which is rumours that we hear about this review of the government's job programs for students. Obviously, we're all anxious about where that review is going to lead. There are rumours that you might even be thinking about cutting the program in order to find, once again, dollars for your tax cut.

Minister, we've heard you say and we've heard your Premier say that you do not believe in government directly creating jobs or funding jobs. But surely you believe that young people who are facing record unemployment levels deserve some assistance in trying to get a summer job so they can go back to school or a first job so they can get some experience in the workplace.

1420

University and college students are going to be graduating in a matter of weeks. They are going to be in the job force. They're going to be adding to those unemploy-

ment numbers that you see. We need to know how long they will have to wait before you announce what you're prepared to do to help. Tell us what the status is of your programs. When will you announce what you're going to do, or are you simply going to stand by and let the months go on and the unemployment numbers increase while you try to decide whether you're prepared to help at all?

Hon Mr Saunderson: I'm very happy to respond again to the Leader of the Opposition. We have not been standing by over these last few months; we have been making a number of changes in this province. We have changed the labour legislation. We have frozen hydro rates. We are reducing the workers' compensation rates.

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): What are you doing about jobs?

The Speaker: Order.

Hon Mr Saunderson: We are trying, and are succeeding, in creating a climate that says Ontario is open for business, and that will create jobs for all levels of people.

I also might say that the personal tax rate cut will be a big boost for the students. I understand that you must have a hard time understanding this, because you did not appreciate this during the campaign.

Mr Colle: Oh, that's going to help the kids.

The Speaker: The member for Oakwood is out of order.

Hon Mr Saunderson: We were elected on a program which I have just outlined, in part, to you. Now, you just sit back and watch how it works.

The Speaker: New question, the leader of the third party.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I guess the students who are finishing classes now and will be out of school in a couple of weeks can sit back and watch while this government figures it out. They won't have any work this summer though, unfortunately.

IPPERWASH PROVINCIAL PARK

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I'd like to return to the minister responsible for native affairs, as it relates to the Ipperwash matter. I recognize that the minister has said that he cannot or will not respond in relation to issues that are perhaps under investigation by the SIU, so I would ask about a matter that does not relate to that but is of significant importance.

As the minister knows, we're into spring. The camping season will begin very soon. This is not a question for the Minister of Natural Resources, I believe; it is for the minister responsible for native affairs. He will remember that in the closing time of that confrontation at Ipperwash Provincial Park, the federal minister responsible for Indian affairs provided evidence dated 1937 from the then assistant deputy minister of lands and forests indicating that the issue around burial grounds at Ipperwash Provincial Park would be dealt with according to the wishes of the Indians.

Have the minister and his staff investigated that evidence? If so, what conclusions has he come to with regard to the assertion by the aboriginal people that there is indeed a burial ground at the park? What is he pre-

pared to do to try to resolve this matter so it does not become a confrontation again this spring?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): There has been no formal claim made by anyone pertaining to the issue of some portion of the Ipperwash park containing a burial ground. We have been very clear that if that is the case, we would do whatever we have to do to ensure that this particular area is respected. That has been made clear.

The other thing I say to the interim leader of the third party is that the property that makes up the Ipperwash Provincial Park was conveyed to the province of Ontario after it had been owned by the federal government. The federal government conveyed that property first to an individual, I believe, and then from that individual to the province of Ontario, and they conveyed that property on the basis of good title being conveyed. As I indicate to the interim leader, if there is a burial ground there, the province is prepared to do everything necessary to respect that burial ground.

Mr Wildman: From the minister's comments, it appears that in six months, since this confrontation took place and since the federal authorities provided the evidence from 1937, this minister hasn't done anything with regard to determining whether or not the matter is substantial, whether or not there is indeed a burial ground in the park. How can it be that in six months after this confrontation, you stand here in this House saying there has been no formal claim? This is an issue that has been ongoing since the 1930s and certainly since the 1940s. There have been issues raised with the provincial authorities going back to at least the 1970s.

Do you agree there is evidence that there is a burial ground in the park or not? If you do agree, then what are you prepared to do to protect that ground and avoid another confrontation this spring?

Hon Mr Harnick: I say to the interim leader that if this was going on through the 1930s and 1940s and 1970s, he had ample opportunity at a time when the park wasn't occupied to make a determination and to find out exactly what the status of that property is. Unfortunately, it demands an onsite inspection and investigation. We have not had an opportunity to do that, and the interim leader knows full well that you can't look in a book or on a map and make that determination. If that's the way he prefaces the question, it begs the answer of why he didn't do it when he was the minister for so many years.

Mr Wildman: The minister demonstrates a complete misunderstanding of the events. The evidence wasn't provided to the provincial government until 1995, by the minister responsible at the federal level, after this confrontation, not before—not before the change of government. It was when you were in government that the evidence, the letter dated August 19, 1937, from the Deputy Minister of Lands and Forests came to light. The demands were there. A claim on the side of the aboriginals was there, but there was not conforming evidence from the provincial government.

The Premier said in a press release dated September 12, 1995: "Our government is committed to restoring hope, economic opportunity and jobs for the first nations people of Ontario. The minister responsible for native

affairs and his officials will continue to work with first nations to address these issues."

That was issued by the Premier at the time of the confrontation at Ipperwash. What have you done in the last six months to resolve this matter so that it is not going to become another confrontation this spring when the camping season starts?

Hon Mr Harnick: We certainly do not want this to become the focal point of another confrontation, but the member knows full well that the information he has does not indicate a location of the burial ground. He also knows full well that it involves an onsite investigation, which he knows full well has not been able to take place as a result of (a) the occupation and (b) the winter.

1430

SERVICES FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, we understand that you spent last Friday in a cabinet meeting getting approval for more cutbacks in your ministry, in this case more cutbacks to the most vulnerable people. The Minister of Finance promised last November in his economic statement that genuine need will be met with compassion and support.

Can you tell us, where is the compassion and support in taking from children the back-to-school and winter clothing allowances, in taking away between \$174 and \$233 a year from every school-aged child who is dependent on social assistance? Where is the compassion in that, Minister?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Community and Social Services): Obviously the member is speculating, and I'm not going to respond to a speculative question like that.

Mr Hampton: If it ain't so, the minister could always say no. Let me try again with the minister who claims to know nothing. We know you are planning to take \$70 million away from disabled people by changing the definition of "disabled." Can you tell us how denying income support to these disabled people, to these people who have the most difficult circumstances in life—can you tell us how taking \$70 million away from disabled people means you're showing compassion and support?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Along with the speculation this member is doing, he's also indicating he has a few claims. I would suggest that the member who's asking the question is the one who probably doesn't have an idea of what he's speaking about in this particular case.

We have been working with the disabled community over the past several months and we have a commitment to work with the disabled community into the future. Clearly, we're trying to make the system better so we can work with the communities and provide them with the services they truly need. The difficulty we've had—I know this House has heard this several times, but this is quite a mess we've inherited and we're still trying to clean this up.

The disabled community has indicated—and not only the disabled community, because the member speculated about another area as well. For example, Mary McCon-

ville, the executive director of the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies, has indicated in the past that it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that there are probably better ways to spend your money and more effective ways to deliver your service. The prior government didn't pay attention to this and now we have the responsibility to make sure the system is better.

Mr Hampton: Unless I'm mistaken, the minister over there has been the Minister of Community and Social Services since late in June. It's about time he takes some responsibility instead of standing up and saying, "I don't know, and even if I do know, it's not my responsibility." Are you the Minister of Community and Social Services or not?

My final supplementary: We have heard that one of the other areas to be cut is help for developmentally handicapped people in Ontario, that you intend to cut \$30 million from that budget. Are you simply going to write off developmentally delayed and handicapped children in this province? Is that your strategy? If you look at the numbers, cutting \$30 million means there is virtually nothing left. What are you doing?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Yes, I am the Minister of Community and Social Services. It's taken you quite a long time to notice that, but thank you very much for that confirmation.

Clearly, the member didn't hear what I said prior to answering his specific question. We are working with the disabled community. I don't know what part of that he doesn't understand. We're trying to work with the caregivers of this province, the families affected. They're having an opportunity to deal with us and work with policy. This is something the prior government never did. They didn't offer the ability for people to come forward and have real input in terms of the policies affecting the disabled community. We're doing this. We're consulting with them and we're working with them. I don't know how much those members don't understand about this process, because this is a government that's willing to consult with people.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): A question to the Minister of Education.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order. Who's your question to, sir?

Mr Colle: The Minister of Education. Minister, how can you justify to the hard-pressed property taxpayers of Metropolitan Toronto, who get no provincial funding for education, the fact that you are now going to claw back from local property taxes that are intended for local schools and grab that money for the provincial treasury? Is this not just plain taxation without representation? Is this not just a plain new surtax on the taxpayers of Metropolitan Toronto to pay for your tax cut for the wealthy?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): In response to your question, no. As you know, we intend to table legislation that will allow school boards that are in a negative grant position to participate

in the fairness and equity of financing the education of young people across this province, because this government believes that every board in this province should participate actively in reducing the money that is spent outside of the classroom in our education system across the province. That is the requirement that this government will have and will do so with negotiations with all school boards across the province.

Mr Colle: I guess this is like a deal that you can't refuse. You know, do you have much choice?

Isn't it bad enough that the property tax base in Metro is haemorrhaging—in fact last year it haemorrhaged by \$110 million as a result of assessment appeals—and now you introduce this new surtax that could be up to \$60 million on the people of Metro Toronto? How is this going to help the quality of education in our classrooms in Metro? What is it going to do about the hard-pressed property taxpayers in Metropolitan Toronto? Mr Minister, doesn't this just plain and simple amount to a shakedown of the taxpayers of Metropolitan Toronto to pay for your tax cut for the rich of this province?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I will agree with the honourable member on one point, and that point is that the current system we have for funding education in the province of Ontario results in inequities in the amount of money that is spent and is available for students in different boards across the province. I think that's regrettable, and this government intends to do something about it. It's unfortunate that the previous government and the government before it chose not to address this situation.

TAX REDUCTION

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the finance minister. Minister, rumours are beginning to fly and we're getting more and more details daily about your plans to drastically slash public sector jobs. We're concerned, of course, that most of them are going to be the front-line, moderately paid jobs, not the \$100,000-plus jobs that you announced earlier today.

But what's most upsetting and alarming about the impending slash of jobs and services is that it wouldn't be necessary if this government wasn't intent on proceeding with its tax cut that will put most of the money into the pockets of the richest people of Ontario. Minister, there is still time to see reason. The budget is more than a month away. Why not give up the tax cut and try and preserve jobs and services in this province?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): As I have indicated to the honourable member and others in this chamber before, to date every measure that this government has taken is to reduce the severe overspending that this government inherited last June. It has absolutely nothing to do with anything else to date, and the honourable member will have to wait and see what happens in the budget this year before she can comment on that.

Ms Lankin: Slashing services in order to pay for the tax cut never made sense from the beginning, but we know that the Premier promised to resign if he didn't live up to that commitment that he had made.

Now we have the spectacle of the Premier, and I'm amazed, today joined by the finance minister, trying to convince us that the tax cut's not going to cost us a penny, somehow it's going to finance itself. Yet we know this government has plans to drastically cut public sector jobs. You won't tell us how many; you won't tell us if it's 13,000 or 17,000 or 20,000. You refused to tell the finance and economics committee what the cost of your tax cut will be or what kind of stimulus to the economy it will or won't produce.

Minister, isn't it time to provide that information to the people of Ontario and let them tell you whether they think the price they're going to have to pay for that tax cut in order to save your Premier's job is worth it or not?

Hon Mr Eves: I think the Premier's job is relatively secure.

This government is committed to restructuring the way the province of Ontario does business, to spending more wisely the way the province of Ontario spends hard-earned taxpayers' money in the province of Ontario. The member is going to have to wait until individual ministry business plans are finalized before anybody can tell her exactly what restructuring is taking place in each ministry. If she will be a little more patient and if she waits until those business plans are finalized and she waits until the budget is introduced this spring, she will have the answer to many of her questions.

1440

STUDENT HEALTH

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): My question is to the Minister of Education and Training. Minister, one of the greatest tragedies we encounter in the education system is the sudden death of a young person. Such was the case for the residents of Scarborough when a student died of acute food reaction almost two years ago. What steps is the minister taking to increase awareness of and deal with anaphylaxis, the life-threatening allergic reaction to peanuts and other food products?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I thank the member for Scarborough Centre for the question. Anaphylaxis is certainly a serious problem for parents, for families and for schools, and most school boards across the province have developed policies to address this and other medical conditions. Recently, my ministry sent a memo and a consensus report from the Anaphylaxis Task Force to every school board across the province in the hope of supporting them in developing programs and developing policies to respond to this condition so that another child's life won't be lost.

Mr Newman: Parents have been calling for the introduction of EpiPens, a needle containing lifesaving shots of adrenalin, in the classroom and on school field trips. What solutions is he prepared to offer to ensure the threat to students is minimized and that if an anaphylactic attack does occur, the best medical help is available to that student?

Hon Mr Snobelen: In addition to the task force I mentioned a littler earlier, we have also consulted extensively on this subject with the Canadian Society of Allergy and Clinical Immunology and also with the

Allergy Asthma Information Association and asked them for their information. In fact, we have sent out some of the reports from these organizations to schools and to school boards across the province. There has been a variety of responses by school boards to these medical conditions and I think the best practices are those that are most successful, and those should be copied by other boards. In fact, some boards permit and allow students to wear EpiPens on a cord around their necks, and train staff to properly apply those. That certainly is a very useful way of responding to the need.

INTERVENOR FUNDING

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Minister of Environment and Energy. People who care about the environment in our province will consider today to be a major step backward in our province; a major step backward for all who are concerned about the environment. Today you are abandoning one of the most valuable instruments that the citizens of this province have to protect our environment, to effectively scrutinize development proposals for garbage dumps and incinerators and nuclear generating stations. You are abandoning intervenor funding—

Laughter.

Mr Bradley:—which the member for Etobicoke West obviously finds amusing, and I don't.

Why have you capitulated to the well-funded and influential waste management association and abandoned environmentally concerned citizens of this province?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Environment and Energy): I thank the member opposite for the question. The Intervenor Funding Project Act was begun in 1988 as a pilot project. It was sustained for three years and then extended for another five years. The member opposite is quite right: This government has allowed that legislation to sunset. We very carefully thought about this program and whether or not we would allow it to continue or would allow it to sunset as the former government had intended. Our top concern when we reviewed this was a continuation of the effective public participation process. From the experience gained under the intervenor funding process, we believe that the process in fact may have helped prolong a lengthy and costly dispute without adding significant environmental benefits to the process. The objective of this government is to maintain a solid public participation process and ensure access to decision-making.

Mr Bradley: By allowing the intervenor funding act to expire, the minister has removed an entire layer of protection, not just from the environment but also from public finances. The minister will know that almost all projects coming under the EA are public sector proposals. Funded intervenors have a track record of asking the kind of questions which will force proponents to doublecheck their assumptions and sometimes reach radically different conclusions.

Are the finances of Ontario Hydro and the treasury of Ontario, which guarantees Ontario Hydro's debt—for instance, because Hydro abandoned its program for extensive construction after the intervenor funding was

provided and after some hearings took place, are you prepared to now abandon that? Are you so flush in this province, for instance, that you can afford to trash this layer of environmental and financial protection? With a mind to saving money for her colleagues and the Minister of Finance, will the minister commit now to asking cabinet to reinstate intervenor funding and not returning Ontario to an era of bake-sale environmentalism?

Hon Mrs Elliott: I would remind my colleagues that this was a project originally intended to sunset, and we have allowed that. The decision that we have taken is consistent with our government's intention to return to efficiency and to streamline the process.

There are a number of avenues for participation in environmental decision-making. Cost awards are still eligible to participants.

Mr Bradley: After the fact.

Hon Mrs Elliott: Yes, that is true, after the fact. I would also like to say that voluntary upfront funding is encouraged, and we will continue to encourage that. In fact, it is to the proponents' benefit to make sure that they have involved decision-makers and interested parties at the outset of the environmental process. I would also like to indicate that there's no supporting evidence that the lack of upfront funding is a disincentive to participation. In fact, under the Ontario Municipal Board or the National Energy Board intervenor funding has never occurred.

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have a question for the Minister of Environment and Energy on the same subject. I have to tell you that I'm shocked by your response so far. I'm going to give you an opportunity to try to revise what you said, because you're totally wrong when you say the previous NDP government was going to sunset the Intervenor Funding Project Act. We had some independent studies done, all of which—I assume you haven't seen them—justify the need for intervenor funding. Our government would have, if not come through with the same act, put something in its place. So this is absolutely a real blow to the environmental movement.

You know that intervenor funding pays the expenses of citizen groups appearing at hearings before the Environmental Assessment Board. These hearings deal with megaprojects like dumps and incineration, highways and expressways, which can drastically pollute neighbourhoods and our environment at large. Your government claims that scrapping intervenor funding will streamline the process, but the fact is that this is just another attempt by this government to muzzle opposition and take away their democratic rights. That's what's going on here.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Put your question.

Ms Churley: We know that big government or garbage companies can afford all the lawyers they want to justify their needs, but citizens will not get a fair chance to stop polluting projects in their backyards. How can you justify—and do not give the same answer that you gave to my colleague because it isn't correct—curtailing citizen rights to a fair and balanced hearing in this province?

Hon Mrs Elliott: Again, I say that there is no evidence that lack of intervenor funding does deny participant response. The participant involvement and proposals going before the Ontario Municipal Board are high. Those who do go before under the Environmental Assessment Act or the Ontario Energy Act are still subject to cost awards.

1450

Ms Churley: Cost awards after the fact didn't work in the past and won't work now. That's one of the major reasons why the Liberal government brought in intervenor funding and our government proceeded with intervenor funding. You are saying that people should hold bake sales now to hire lawyers and legal experts and scientific experts to assist them in hearings? That's ridiculous.

You are saying that you want big government to have more power and citizens to come forward as volunteers. Let me say to you that this government has not learned the lessons of Bill 26. People will not put up with that arrogance.

We know that the government has another agenda here. They want to clear the way for more privatization. I note that the Ontario Waste Management Association, the private garbage industry lobby, has praised the minister's decision.

Minister, I want to ask you to commit today: Will you at least make sure that when a private proponent wants to place a dump in someone's backyard, citizens' groups get funding from that company to present their case before the Environmental Assessment Board? I'm asking you, if you're scrapping this intervenor environmental funding, that you at least find something else to replace it.

Hon Mrs Elliott: During our review, our consideration was to ensure effective public participation, and our decision not to allow this to continue is part of our consistent commitment to efficient and decisive decision-making in this province.

Cost awards are still allowed under the Environmental Assessment Act and the Ontario Energy Board Act. We encourage proponent pre-hearing funding, and certainly proponents benefit from that in moving forward under the Environmental Assessment Act.

When we come forward with our changes to waste reform under the Environmental Assessment Act, we believe we will be able to help participants get their views known up front.

WORKPLACE HEALTH AND SAFETY

Mr Jerry J. Ouellette (Oshawa): My question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, recently you announced reforms to the occupational health and safety system in Ontario. At that time you said the reforms, which were made in response to the recommendations of the review panel on occupational health and safety, are an important step towards our goals of preventing workplace injuries and illness and creating a coordinated and cost-effective course to making Ontario workplaces among the safest in the world.

One of the needed reforms you mentioned in your statement was the identification of priorities and goals for health and safety, with a focus on prevention through

improved performance evaluation measurement. Will you explain the importance of monitoring and measuring our progress with respect to the government's overall objective of making Ontario's workplaces among the safest in the world?

Hon Elizabeth Witmer (Minister of Labour): I would like to indicate that it is our objective to prevent illness and injury in the workplace. It is our intention to create workplaces that are the safest in the world, and in order to do so, we need to do what the agency had never done. In fact, the Provincial Auditor indicated in his report that one of the greatest shortcomings of the Workplace Health and Safety Agency was the fact that they had never been able to demonstrate that they had been able to indicate there was a reduction in workplace injuries and illness.

We are determined to set standards. We are going to monitor, we are going to measure and we are going to evaluate in order to ensure that there is progressive reduction in the number of illnesses and injuries in the workplace. Only in this way can we focus on prevention and use our resources in the most effective way.

Mr Ouellette: My second question is with respect to the comments made in your announcement on March 21, 1996, to the member for Hamilton Centre, David Christopherson. The member's comments were about core certification training and what the training will include once reformed. The member seemed to suggest that the new training program would, among other things, exclude training with respect to musculoskeletal injury prevention and health and safety law.

Minister, will you clarify the confusion that exists and tell us what the core certification training will include?

Hon Mrs Witmer: In response to the question, I would like to indicate that our objective is to ensure that the training that we provide is going to be responsive to the needs of the individual workplaces and is going to be cost-effective and also allow the greatest number of people to participate.

There are actually two programs, and I think the member opposite probably was somewhat confused the other day. We have in place an interim program which presently is a four- and a seven-day program, and we are still including health and safety within that program.

We also are establishing new standards. Those standards are presently out for discussion. Stakeholders have an opportunity to provide us with input until the end of April. There is a basic certification standard being developed, and also there will be a workplace-hazard-specific standard that will be developed. Again, there will be the opportunity for the inclusion of health and safety, and also a discussion of musculoskeletal injury if the workplace parties, when they are doing their assessment of hazards in the workplace, determine that to be necessary for their particular workplace.

HIGHWAY MAINTENANCE

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, I quote from Hansard on March 26, 1996, where you said: "This government is committed to ensuring municipalities have

the freedom and flexibility to make decisions about their road system.... We are going to be phasing in numerous highways across this province.... But we will allow municipalities ample time to make the adjustments in order to meet their commitments."

Minister, in your comments to the Legislature on that day, I noted that you didn't use the words "reasonable" and "fair," yet in a February 5, 1996, letter to the municipalities you said, and I quote again, "This policy must be reasonable and fair to the affected municipalities." As it relates to the transfer of some 3,700 kilometres of roads—provincial highways—in this province to municipalities, would you, for this Legislature, define what you consider reasonable and fair?

Hon Al Palladini (Minister of Transportation): I certainly would like the opportunity to answer the member. However, I would like to correct one thing, if I may: There are approximately 1,759 kilometres that will be transferred over the next three years in the province of Ontario. And yes, I would like to once again reiterate that this government will do the transition in an orderly way, and we are going to be reasonable in our negotiations.

Mr Crozier: Perhaps the minister has deducted all the Palladini potholes from the total kilometrage and that's how he came up with it, because I have a letter from the warden of the county of Essex that says, "The province originally identified 3,700 kilometres of potential highway transfers." Two hundred and fifty have already been transferred, and you're now considering an additional 1,765. I'm sure that he is concerned, as well as all the others, about what you're going to do with the other 1,685. Maybe you'd like to tell us today that you're not going to transfer them.

In any event, these highways are still important to the future of the province of Ontario for tourism and for economic growth and development. MTO guidelines from July 1995 say all transfers must be of good financial benefit and costsaving to the ministry and the municipalities to ensure good value for the taxpayers' money.

The Ontario Good Roads Association, in a resolution, urged the province of Ontario to withdraw the proposed downloading of their unwanted highways unless they, the province, are prepared to provide adequate funding to all the affected municipalities. As you know, Minister, some municipalities have already agreed with the ministry and have received adequate funding, 100% funding, whereas now it's suggested at least that others may only receive 22%.

My question is this then: How are municipalities to address the needs of existing roads and bridges with reduced grants and then be handed even more additional financial responsibilities without compensation? Will block funding be increased accordingly to address the increased maintenance costs?

Hon Mr Palladini: The honourable member would like us to believe it's the Conservative Party or the Mike Harris government that's initiating highway transfers. This has been an ongoing process. In terms of economic development in the province, this government recognizes the importance of our highway infrastructure; that is one of the areas. Your government, when it was in power, should have put more money back in the infrastructure.

However, we do have a commitment. We are going to be transferring highways that serve a municipal purpose so we can put more money back in our highway infrastructure, so we can develop economic development.

1500

CLEANING SERVICES CONTRACT

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): My question is to the Chair of Management Board. The thick pile of documents you tabled recently raise a couple of clear questions and discrepancies, and I'll come back to that at a later date. Today, I want to focus on the plight of the 30 cleaners who have lost their jobs and indeed what has happened to the 47 who have jobs.

Of the remaining 47 who have jobs—again, 30 of them are now unemployed, thanks to your Bill 7—they have had their wages cut by 29%. Further, the new contractor has refused to honour the collective agreement, refused to honour the union of choice of these workers and refused to use seniority rights as a key determinant in who would stay and who would go.

When I raised these issues with you in the House before they happened, you said: "I will stand on my feet here today and say that the very provision which we have put on the table for OPSEU, we will observe with the people involved in this particular contract."

Given that OPSEU, as a result of its victory in this recent strike, now has seniority rights strengthened and guaranteed and that you have promised to try to get new employers to match current salaries and benefits—in fact, if OPSEU members are asked to take a job that has a 15% wage cut or more, they can refuse and qualify for enriched severance—are you prepared today to stand in your place and honour your commitment to give those same rights to those workers as you've now given to OPSEU?

Hon David Johnson (Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet): First of all, we should acknowledge that successor rights are not in place today for the civil service. The contract that was negotiated with OPSEU does not contain a successor rights clause.

What we said we would do with OPSEU, what is in the contract, is that the government would make reasonable efforts to attempt that the jobs would go with the new employers. That's exactly what we've done in this case where the employees are not actually employees of the government. The cleaners are not employees of the government; they're employees of another contractor.

What has happened is that through the bidding process—and I mentioned this in the House the other day—the Ontario Realty Corp reviewed the bids of the five bidders, and one of the reasons the successful bidder was chosen is because the successful bidder agreed to take as many employees as possible who are currently employed by the other contractor.

That, I believe, is honouring the obligation of what I said we would do in this House in terms of attempting to ensure that the employees would go with the job. In fact, all the employees who have been hired have gone with the new contractor.

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): Minister, that just isn't good enough. That's not what you said. That's not the commitment you gave in this House. As my colleague said to you, and he quoted back the same words you used last week: "I will stand on my feet here today and say that the very provision which we have put on the table for OPSEU we will observe with the people involved in this particular contract." You knew all the facts at the time that you made that commitment, Minister. You're now retracting from that commitment.

You can talk about process all you want, but let me talk to you about the people we are dealing with here, because behind your process what you are doing is affecting real people, people with long service, people who have cleaned your offices and our offices for years and years. They're people like Fernanda Gomes, who for 16 years has been doing this work; Maria Fresens, who for 15 years has been doing this work; Maria Pereira, who for 17 years has been doing this work. They're but three of the 30 people who no longer have a job because of the actions you and your government have taken.

What do you say to these women, many of whom live in the riding that I have the privilege of representing, but also women in the rest of the city of Toronto, who are out of a job because of your actions? You are now also saying that you're not living up to the commitment to be fair. Why, Minister?

Hon David Johnson: Obviously, this is a difficult situation. This government reviewed carefully the situation. The compensation levels in terms of pay and benefits amounted to about \$19 a person. We put the contract out for bid on behalf of the taxpayers. A contractor came in, recommending a reduction of almost \$2.5 million over the course of two years to the taxpayer. The commitment I made through the contract to OPSEU was that we would make reasonable efforts to ensure that the employees would go with the contract. We did make reasonable efforts. In fact, we chose a bid that was not the lowest bid. The reason we chose the bid which was not the lowest bid was primarily because the winning bidder chose to take the existing employees. If that isn't a reasonable effort, I don't know what is.

PETITIONS

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that North York Branson Hospital merge with York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I have affixed my signature.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Transportation Minister Al Palladini is proposing legislation that will cost many towns their bus service.

"Bus companies are currently required to provide service for smaller towns as a condition of being given the rights to high-profit routes and charter markets. Minister Palladini's plan to deregulate will eliminate all conditions and requirements. As a result, hundreds of smaller communities like ours will lose bus service.

"Minister, people in smaller towns need bus service just as much as people in big cities. We depend upon buses to visit friends and family, to get to appointments in nearby towns, to ship our Christmas presents and to receive our repair parts. The undersigned call upon the members of the Legislative Assembly to oppose bus deregulation and the elimination of our bus service."

This is signed by over 60 people in London and area. I'm proud to affix my signature.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mrs Lillian Ross (Hamilton West): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the community living in the vicinity of Twenty Road and Highway 6, regional municipality of Hamilton-Wentworth, consider this intersection as very hazardous and dangerous due to poor visibility and traffic volume,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The undersigned petition the Ministry of Transportation to begin road improvements and install a stoplight at the intersection of 20 Road and Highway 6 immediately to facilitate the safety of all motorists accessing these roads."

I affix my signature to this petition.

1510

ST MARY'S FAMILY LEARNING CENTRE

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): "Whereas St Mary's Family Learning Centre of Windsor Inc, being funded by the Ministry of Community and Social services, provides support and educational opportunities for parents, home child care providers and resources for licensed child care centres to approximately 500 adults and 2,000 children;

"Whereas St Mary's Family Learning Centre of Windsor Inc relies on donations, user fees and volunteerism as well as Ministry of Community and Social Services funding to provide current services; and

"Whereas only 3% of the total Ministry of Community and Social Services child care budget is spent on family resource programs such as St Mary's Family Learning Centre to support families who choose home child care as an option; and

"Whereas all families pay taxes that support child care but a vast majority of the current child care budget is spent on licensed child care spaces that are used by only 8.5% of children; and

"Whereas the other 91.5% of families have few publicly funded services available to them,

"Therefore, your petitioners call upon the Legislative Assembly to maintain funding to St Mary's Family Learning Centre."

I support this and affix my signature to it.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have here a petition from a number of people throughout the Metro area and they petition the Ontario Legislature as follows:

"To Premier Michael Harris, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing Al Leach, and members of the provincial Legislature:

"Whereas to abolish rent control in favour of a market system would be disastrous for tenants and give further power and allow unnecessary profit for landlords,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to support universal and mandatory rent controls which reflect a fair balance between the ability of tenants to pay and the necessary costs of supplying well-maintained and secure housing."

I have signed the petition.

CHILD CARE

Mr Bill Grimmert (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I have a petition which I'm presenting on behalf of the member for Simcoe East. It relates to child care. It's signed by some 26 people.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Do not implement user fees and/or copayments to the Ontario drug benefit program. User fees are not the solution; they only deter the most vulnerable from getting the help they really need. These fees will further diminish universal health care in Ontario, with the poor and the seniors bearing the brunt of your proposed actions."

This is signed by constituents from the riding of Oriole, and I am pleased to affix my signature to their important petition.

RENT REGULATION

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I have a petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario which reads as follows:

"Whereas Mike Harris's Conservative government of Ontario is planning to destroy the present system of rent control;

"Whereas Mike Harris and the Conservative Party made no mention of scrapping rent control during the election campaign of 1995 or in the Common Sense Revolution document;

"Whereas a number of Conservative candidates in ridings with high tenant populations campaigned during the 1995 election on a platform of protecting the current rent control system;

"Whereas the government has consulted with special-interest groups representing landlords and developers while cutting funding to organizations representing the 3.5 million tenants in Ontario;

"Whereas eliminating rent control will result in skyrocketing rents in Ontario,

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop the attack on the 3.5 million tenants of this province."

I have affixed my name to this and I agree with the petitioners.

PRIVATIZATION OF ONTARIO HYDRO

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): I have a petition that reads as follows:

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the matter of selling Ontario Hydro is likely to come before the Legislature in the near future;

"Whereas we, the undersigned residents of Ontario, who have, through the payment of electricity rates, paid for Ontario Hydro, are concerned about privatization of Ontario Hydro, leading to higher rates, lower reliability and compromised nuclear safety,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario as follows:

"Please preserve the public ownership of Ontario Hydro and refuse to sell this important public asset."

SPENDING REDUCTIONS

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned of Cornwall area, petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"Whereas the provincial government's deep cutbacks and cancellations of public services cause tremendous harm to the local economy; and

"Whereas this attack on the social fabric of our community goes far beyond the agenda of the Common Sense Revolution; and

"Whereas these cuts will cause unacceptable damage to the community health, justice system, child protection, road safety and education services; and

"Whereas we represent well-informed service providers and a significant portion of the local base;

"Be it resolved that we call on the provincial government to cease all announcement of cutbacks to ensure that they are all subject to open, democratic consultation and debate."

I've also signed the petition.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Transportation Minister Al Palladini is proposing legislation that will cost many towns their bus service.

"Bus companies are currently required to provide service for smaller towns as a condition of being given rights to high-profit routes and charter markets. Minister Palladini's plan to deregulate will eliminate all conditions and requirements. As a result, hundred of smaller communities like ours will lose bus service.

"Minister, people in smaller towns need bus service just as much as people in big cities. We depend upon buses to visit family and friends, to get to appointments in nearby towns, to ship our Christmas presents and to receive our repair parts. The undersigned call upon the members of the Legislative Assembly to oppose bus deregulation and the elimination of our bus service."

This is signed by 15 individuals, and I'm affixing my signature as well.

NATIVE HUNTING AND FISHING

Mr Gary Fox (Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings): I have a petition today to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, with 1,092 signatures:

"Whereas section 35(1) of the Constitution Act, 1982, recognizes and affirms both the aboriginal and treaty rights of the aboriginal peoples of Canada as they existed in 1982;

"Whereas the Mohawks of Tyendinaga do not have aboriginal or treaty rights to fish or hunt off their reserve unless they do so under the same laws that apply to non-natives;

"Whereas several infractions under conservation laws have been reported and documented over the past few years, such as spearing fish in fish sanctuaries, gill netting, commercialization of the resource, and hunting out of season, and no charges were laid;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government of Ontario take immediate action to stop all illegal hunting and fishing activities by the Mohawks of Tyendinaga and enforce conservation laws for both natives and non-natives equally, as dictated by the Supreme Court of Canada."

I have affixed my signature.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned citizens of Ontario, do not want the rent-geared-to-income program to be eliminated. This program provides decent housing for low- and middle-income tenants, consisting of 40% seniors, 42% families, 18% special-needs and disabled tenants.

"We believe a change to the US-style voucher system proposed by this government will destroy our communities and change the fabric of life in Ontario."

I so agree by affixing my signature to this petition.

ST JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition to the Minister of Health and the Hamilton-Wentworth District Health Council:

"Whereas the Hamilton-Wentworth health action task force, as part of their report, has recommended the closure of St Joseph's Hospital in Hamilton; and

"Whereas it is recognized that the health care system should be made as efficient as possible; and

"Whereas the quality of health care in our community should not be sacrificed in the name of efficiency; and

"Whereas the Mike Harris government promised to protect the quality of health care in Ontario; and

"Whereas we, the undersigned, believe that maintaining the presence of St Joseph's Hospital in downtown Hamilton is a vital component of our health care system;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Minister of Health and the Hamilton-Wentworth District Health Council ensure the continuance of St Joseph's Hospital at its present site."

I affix my signature also.

1520

SCARBOROUGH GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I rise today with a petition signed by a number of residents from Scarborough. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the recommendations of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council to close inpatient paediatric beds, the special care nursery and the burn unit at Scarborough General Hospital resulting in significantly reduced access to paediatric, newborn and burn care for a large geographic area of Scarborough; and

"Whereas the paediatric unit, special care nursery and burn unit at Scarborough General Hospital provide very cost-efficient, quality care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to:

"(1) Continue paediatric services including inpatient paediatric beds,

"(2) Continue special care nursery services,

"(3) Continue and combine Metropolitan Toronto's burn care

"At Scarborough General Hospital!"

I am pleased to affix my name to this petition.

TRANSITION HOUSE

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Transition House in Chatham has provided emergency shelter to troubled or abused youth as well as support, counselling and life skills training since 1990, and operating on a five-year budget of \$865,000 they have counselled over 400 youth and served over 20,000 meals;

"Whereas the city of Chatham and the county of Kent rely on Transition House to meet the needs of its troubled youth and there is no other facility to serve the needs of the community;...

"Whereas it has been shown that massive cuts to health services, school systems and social services have a definite impact on statistics of children and youth in crisis;

"Whereas the government of Ontario has cut its direct funding to Transition House by almost \$48,000 annually and placed the existence of Transition House in jeopardy;

"Be it therefore resolved that we, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to reverse its decision to cut the funding of Transition House in Chatham."

I affix my signature to it.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly and the Minister of Labour.

"We, the undersigned, are opposed to your government's proposed changes to Ontario's workers' compensation system including elimination of the bipartite board of directors; reduced temporary benefits; introduction of the three-day period from the time of injury with no pay; legislated limits on entitlement, thereby excluding repetitive strain, chronic pain and stress claims from eligibility for compensation; reduced permanent pensions and pension supplements.

"Workers' compensation is not a handout; it is an insurance plan for which premiums are paid; it is a legal obligation that employers have to employees who 80 years ago traded their right to sue employers in return for this insurance plan.

"Therefore, we demand no reduction in existing benefits, improved re-employment and vocational rehabilitation, tightened enforcement of health and safety to prevent injuries, no reduction in current Workers' Compensation Board staff levels and that the bipartite board structure be left intact."

I affix my signature also.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): I have a petition for the Legislative Assembly of the province of Ontario.

"Canada was founded on Christian-Judaeo principles. While the multicultural mosaic of our nation is clearly recognized and celebrated, we, the undersigned citizens, concerned about the lack of religious content within the public education system, implore the government of Ontario to give serious consideration to the return of the Lord's Prayer to the classrooms of our schools, since the content of the prayer should not be offensive to any religious tradition or nationality. The intent is not to impose one particular belief, but rather to maintain the foundation upon which our country was founded."

This petition has 350 signatures on it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

LAND USE PLANNING
AND PROTECTION ACT, 1995LOI DE 1995 SUR LA PROTECTION
ET L'AMÉNAGEMENT DU TERRITOIRE

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for third reading of Bill 20, An Act to promote economic growth

and protect the environment by streamlining the land use planning and development system through amendments related to planning, development, municipal and heritage matters / *Projet de loi 20, Loi visant à promouvoir la croissance économique et à protéger l'environnement en rationalisant le système d'aménagement et de mise en valeur du territoire au moyen de modifications touchant des questions relatives à l'aménagement, la mise en valeur, les municipalités et le patrimoine.*

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): When we adjourned, the member for Rainy River had the floor.

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I was of course speaking when we last were dealing with this matter. I intend to make a few brief comments today about the bill and, generally, my views on the bill after sitting on committee and hearing some of the views of those people who came forward.

I indicated last day that in my view the bill was not going to provide the kind of environmental protection that we need in terms of land use planning. I indicated that for the most part this bill is simply a wish list for that part of the development industry that wants to make a quick buck at the expense of the environment, and the shame of it all is that this government actually believes that that contributes to sustainable development, that that's the kind of development you want to base your economy around.

I think we know from examples elsewhere in the world that that is exactly the kind of development you don't want to base your economy on, that it is quite wrong-headed, that down the road the costs of that kind of quick-buck approach are far more than the few dollars the government might stand to make or the development industry might stand to make by the kind of irresponsible land use planning that will be engendered in this bill.

I want to say a few words about agricultural land, because I believe it is in terms of agricultural land that a great deal will be lost. What this bill will allow is the kind of haphazard development out there which will ensure that our prime agricultural land is eaten up on a piecemeal basis. Let me mention just some of the things I believe are going to happen.

First of all, we need to keep context in mind here. If the Ministry of Natural Resources is going to shed 2,000 of its staff—I think it may be more than 2,000 of its staff—we will simply not have the ecologists, the foresters, the land use experts in that ministry to ensure that environmental integrity is preserved. Conservation authorities are losing well over 50% of their staff, so they will not have the people available to ensure that good conservation measures are followed and to ensure that conservation of the land and conservation of resources is part of the development strategy.

The Ministry of Environment is also going through drastic cuts, so they will not have the personnel who will ensure that conservation rules and conservation principles are followed. Finally, the Ministry of Agriculture is going through at least a \$156-million downsizing, which will mean that expertise will no longer reside in the Ministry of Agriculture either.

With all of that, with that loss of expertise, with that loss of knowledge and experience and wisdom and

judgement from those ministries, there won't be that second stage, that second line of support that might be able to help out in the case of weak legislation. What it means then is that not only will this be very weak legislation, but the people who could have helped somehow to ameliorate weak legislation simply won't be there.

I predict that what will happen is we will see acre after acre, township after township of good agricultural land eaten up by unplanned development, by let's-make-a-quick-buck development, by development that frankly is not in tune with the kind of land use planning we need to see as we enter the 21st century.

As our agricultural production is becoming more important, as our agricultural land has greater and greater potential in terms of producing for not only the Canadian market but the North American market and even the offshore market, as all of this potential is developing, this government's legislation is going to negate that potential and is going to eat away, decimate the possibilities of agricultural production in this province and is going to decimate the very best agricultural land in this province.

What are we left with? Where are we headed at the end of the day with this government and this legislation? Viewed from the broader context, this creates a very bad precedent indeed. As a province, as part of Canada, we are trying to persuade other jurisdictions to clean up their air, to participate in the cleanup of the Great Lakes, to participate in the lowering of sulphur dioxide in the air, to participate in the lowering of carbon monoxide in the air.

We are trying to persuade jurisdictions in other continents not to burn away the rain forest and further deplete the world environment. We are trying to persuade other jurisdictions to preserve chunks and pieces of their natural environment so that we preserve the environmental diversity of the world, the ecological diversity. Yet when we try to make those arguments, when those governments, when those jurisdictions point the finger back at us and say, "What have you done?" we will have nothing to show.

Worse than that, this government will have to admit that it has done less than was being done in the 1980s and the early 1990s, that it has gone back to a substandard approach to environmental planning, a substandard approach to land use planning, which sets no example for the rest of the world, which gives us no basis to argue from, which frankly puts us in the position of being one of the worst offenders.

1530

Not only is this legislation bad for Ontario and bad for Ontario's land use planning, bad for Ontario's natural environment, bad for the future of our water resources, our air resources and our land resources, bad for our agricultural production in the longer term, bad in terms of the money it's going to cost because of the extra infrastructure costs associated with sprawling urban development; not only is it bad because of all those things, but it puts us in a very bad position in terms of the relationships we have with other jurisdictions when we talk to them and try to persuade them to clean up their environment, try to persuade them to be a more environmentally responsible jurisdiction on the world stage. We have

absolutely no place to argue, no stage to argue from. With this bill and with the cuts that are happening in the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Natural Resources and the conservation authorities, Ontario has become one of the worst offenders. That is a shame.

But this government, because it is so preoccupied with making a quick buck, doesn't understand that you don't have to scratch very far with almost every individual in this province to find that people really do care about the environment. I will say that three or four years down the road, when people have had a chance to reflect on this government's abysmal environmental record, on its abysmal record for the protection of the landscape, its abysmal record in terms of being an ecologically responsible government, they will turn on this government and this government will be taught a lesson about how important environmental issues are to all people: people who have money, people who do not have money, people who have wealth and status, and people who come from the ordinary communities of this province.

So the government can go ahead and pass this legislation. They will be taught a lesson, because this is shameful legislation, it is destructive legislation, and when people have an opportunity to understand that, they will come back and they will punish this government for it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Questions or comments?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I was glad the member took the full time to speak because it allowed him to talk about many of the problems that exist with this particular bill, one that some people have called a bill designed to destroy planning and environment in the province of Ontario. That's probably an overstatement, but it certainly is a concern that people have about the provisions of this bill. The member dealt with a number of those provisions whereby he recognized that the long-term implications of this legislation are to be worried about.

We heard today that the government was abandoning intervenor funding, which has allowed citizens in our province to be able to hire legal counsel and experts in various fields in order that they may participate in various hearings. With the loss of the environmental intervenor funding in combination with this bill, we see a major step back in terms of the planning process and the ability of individual citizens to have appropriate and effective access to that system. I think what we will see will be a number of mistakes that will be made that in the long run will be costly.

If you look at some of the projects which were stopped or considerably altered as a result of intervenor funding, for instance in the planning process because planning is environmental planning as well as what we call Ontario Municipal Board-type planning, if you look at the number of projects that were significantly altered as a result of good intervention by citizens' groups, you would find that governments in the long run will save money.

Unfortunately, many of the provisions of this bill represent a step backward because they allow people less access to the system. They give developers a leg up, which the government wants to do because they want

development to take place in the province. Development, however, when it takes place, should be good development, and I think that this bill is a step in the wrong direction in terms of ensuring good development in Ontario.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I'd like to take these few minutes to congratulate my colleague from Rainy River in regard to the comments he made around land use. I would say in keeping with that, he's quite right. Really what you've got here is a government that's intent on changing the rules of the game so that it's so heavily weighted towards the developers that in the end the very people that the projects are supposed to benefit are really the ones that are going to be left by the way-side, especially so when you take a look at what they're doing in regard to the provincial policies in the province. When the provincial policies are being rewritten, I think they're being rewritten in such a way that the weight of those rules are really put in the favour of developers, to the point that I think we're forgetting what the whole idea was in the first place, which is to have policies that reflect good planning in the province of Ontario but also policies that reflect protection of our environment.

When my colleague from Riverdale today asked the question of the Minister of Environment and Energy in regard to the whole question of intervenor funding, I think it's only another piece of the puzzle that we're seeing. We're seeing that the government, under Bill 20, is changing the rules so that they're so weighted towards the developers that a lot of projects will go forward I fear that shouldn't go forward or are not good for the community in regard to their net impact on the environment.

After that, you see what happened today with my colleague from Riverdale when she asked the question to the Minister of Environment. The Minister of Environment is saying, "Well, intervenor funding isn't important," and that the people will be able to go out and move forward their complaints through the courts by doing a number of things, short of having intervenor funding from the government.

I would just say it was a comment made in jest, but she's suggesting almost that people, in order to get the money necessary to go to the courts, would have to do bake sales in order to raise the dollars—

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Not in jest.

Mr Bisson: No, I'm just saying it's—

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Shame.

Mr Bisson: —shameful. She's suggesting that they can go out and do bake sales in order to raise money to go forward with complaints against bad development in the province when it comes to larger projects. So I would move that we change her title and we call her the minister responsible for bake sales.

Ms Churley: This gives me a two-minute opportunity to do a little bit of summing up here. I want to congratulate my colleague from Rainy River. It's very clear that what this government is doing is curtailing public participation in the planning process, just as today we saw with intervenor funding where public participation is being almost completely curtailed. It's not correct when the minister says that after-the-fact funding, when the hearing

is over, there could be, might be, some funding awarded. We don't know that. There are not a lot of experts and lawyers out there who are able to or who are willing to work for free in a sometimes lengthy, complicated process.

This government is acting almost in secret. Most of the things that they're doing, dismantling environmental protection, which we have built up for over 20 years in this province, we're seeing it all go down the drain right under our noses, and overall the public aren't even aware that it's happening.

It's the same thing with Bill 20. In the long run, we know that the ramifications of this bill will be that it'll cost taxpayers more in the long run. Urban sprawl costs taxpayers more money. Bad environmental development will cost taxpayers more money down the road, and furthermore, the government will not even achieve its stated goal with this bill, and that is to cut the length of the process, to cut red tape.

What we see very clearly, what will happen is that there'll be a lot more site-by-site specific hearings before the OMB, either from the developer or from community or environmental groups. So it isn't even going to achieve what they hoped to achieve. I would suggest they withdraw—

The Acting Speaker: Thank you.

Mr Gerretsen: There's perhaps one other aspect to the whole public process that can be mentioned at this time. We all realize that the time limit that the public has to respond to the various proposals has been drastically reduced by 10 days. The general theory by the government is that this somehow speeds the planning process along, when we well know that what usually takes the length of time in the planning process is the length of time that, administratively, a planning staff or a city council or indeed the various government departments here at Queen's Park take to actually deal with a development proposal. By taking 10 days away from the public appeal process, we really aren't doing anything at all.

1540

The other thing that ought to be said about the public process is that quite often when you get the public involved in a project early on in the game and when everybody around the table knows exactly what everybody's position is, you can actually end up with a development proposal and with a final development that is a lot more appealing and attractive to everyone. This notion that by getting the public involved you are somehow hindering development and that things just will not be approved as quickly as possible or that that will detract from the development is completely erroneous. It's always been my experience that public input is something that can be valued and something that in effect can lead to an improvement of the final product.

Finally, I would just say one thing with respect to the one-window approach, simply this: Unless we know what the public protocols are between the various departments and unless those protocols are being delivered publicly so that the public knows exactly what the process is internally—the kind of program you're setting up by having the one-window approach is a secretive process—the public

will not know the manner in which the final decision is reached by the government.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Rainy River, you have two minutes to reply.

Mr Hampton: Since this brings to an end the debate and I understand we're going to vote in a couple of minutes, let me just say in response a couple of things about the comments that were made.

First of all, the member for St Catharines—I know that he stands almost alone in his party in opposing this legislation—I want to thank him for his courageous position and his courageous response, because I know there are many Liberal backbenchers who in fact support what the government is doing here and think this kind of helter-skelter, quick-buck development is more than acceptable, is good for people. So I want to thank the member for St Catharines for his comments.

I want to thank the member for Cochrane South as well. As the housing and municipal affairs critic for our caucus, he knows very well what some of the repercussions of sprawling urban development will be in terms of the increased costs of infrastructure and providing services, and in effect the subsidy that taxpayers will have to provide to the private developers. I suspect that, given this government, they think it is quite proper for taxpayers to provide subsidies to private developers. In fact, I think it's part of their overall strategy that you take money from people on social assistance, you take money out of education, you take money out of health care, but you subsidize private developers. I think that's very much in line with their vision of the world.

I also want to thank our environment critic, who knows full well the long-term environmental consequences of this very destructive piece of legislation.

As I said earlier, I think this is a shameful piece of legislation and will put Ontario in a very dishonourable position on the environmental record.

The Acting Speaker: Time has expired. Any further debate? If not, the parliamentary assistant, the member for Oxford, Mr Hardeman, has moved third reading of Bill 20. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

Mr David Turnbull (York Mills): Mr Speaker, I believe we have all-party agreement that this should be a five-minute bell.

The Acting Speaker: Agreed? Agreed. This will be a five-minute bell.

The bells rang from 1545 to 1550.

The Acting Speaker: Will the members please take their seats.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

| | | |
|-----------------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| Arnott, Ted | Hardeman, Ernie | Rollins, E.J. Douglas |
| Baird, John R. | Harnick, Charles | Ross, Lillian |
| Barrett, Toby | Harris, Michael D. | Sampson, Rob |
| Bassett, Isabel | Hastings, John | Saunderson, William |

| | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|---------------------|
| Beaubien, Marcel | Hodgson, Chris | Shea, Derwyn |
| Boushy, Dave | Jackson, Cameron | Skarica, Toni |
| Brown, Jim | Johns, Helen | Smith, Bruce |
| Carr, Gary | Johnson, Bert | Snobelen, John |
| Clement, Tony | Johnson, Ron | Spina, Joseph |
| Cunningham, Dianne | Kells, Morley | Sterling, Norman W. |
| Danford, Harry | Klees, Frank | Stewart, R. Gary |
| DeFaria, Carl | Leadston, Gary L. | Tascona, Joseph N. |
| Doyle, Ed | Marland, Margaret | Tilson, David |
| Elliott, Brenda | Martiniuk, Gerry | Tsubouchi, David H. |
| Eves, Ernie L. | Maves, Bart | Turnbail, David |
| Fisher, Barbara | Munro, Julia | Vankoughnet, Bill |
| Flaherty, Jim | Mushinski, Marilyn | Villeneuve, Noble |
| Ford, Douglas B. | Newman, Dan | Wettlaufer, Wayne |
| Fox, Gary | North, Peter | Wilson, Jim |
| Froese, Tom | O'Toole, John | Witmer, Elizabeth |
| Galt, Doug | Ouellette, Jerry J. | Wood, Bob |
| Gilchrist, Steve | Palladini, Al | Young, Terence H. |
| Grimmett, Bill | Parker, John L. | |
| Guzzo, Garry J. | Pettit, Trevor | |

The Acting Speaker: All those opposed to the motion will please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

| Nays | | |
|-----------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Bartolucci, Rick | Curling, Alvin | McGuinty, Dalton |
| Bisson, Gilles | Duncan, Dwight | McLeod, Lyn |
| Boyd, Marion | Gerretsen, John | Patten, Richard |
| Bradley, James J. | Grandmaitre, Bernard | Phillips, Gerry |
| Caplan, Elinor | Hampton, Howard | Pouliot, Gilles |
| Christopherson, David | Hoy, Pat | Pupatello, Sandra |
| Churley, Marilyn | Kormos, Peter | Sergio, Mario |
| Cleary, John C. | Lalonde, Jean-Marc | Silipo, Tony |
| Colle, Mike | Lankin, Frances | Wildman, Bud |
| Cooke, David S. | Laughren, Floyd | Wood, Len |
| Cordiano, Joseph | Martel, Shelley | |
| Crozier, Bruce | Martin, Tony | |

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 70, the nays 34.

The Acting Speaker: I declare the motion carried.

Resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TEACHERS ACT, 1995

LOI DE 1995

SUR L'ORDRE DES ENSEIGNANTES ET DES ENSEIGNANTS DE L'ONTARIO

Mr Snobelen moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 31, An Act to establish the Ontario College of Teachers and to make related amendments to certain statutes / Loi créant l'Ordre des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario et apportant des modifications connexes à certaines lois.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I am pleased to table for second reading Bill 31.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Wait for just a minute. Wait until the House simmers down, and you'll have the floor.

Hon Mr Snobelen: This is an act that will establish the Ontario College of Teachers and recognize teaching as a profession in the province of Ontario in a self-directed manner similar to other professions in the province.

We have, as you are aware, announced reforms to secondary school to make it more relevant to the needs of students and of the businesses that hire them. We are committed to establishing—

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): All the teachers are being laid off. What do they need a college for?

The Acting Speaker: Please, there's too much noise in the House.

Mr Kormos: There are no teachers left. You've cut the classrooms.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please, the member for Welland-Thorold. I've heard you loud and clear.

Mr Kormos: It's true. Niagara region lost 450 teachers last week. Mr Snobelen is talking about preserving classroom quality. What a lie.

The Acting Speaker: Order.

Hon Mr Snobelen: We are committed to establishing a demanding, province-wide core curriculum and high standards for student achievement and a comprehensive testing program for the province. To increase parent involvement in our schools, we are moving forward with the establishment of school councils. We have taken action to deliver on our pledge to have an affordable education system, one that provides real value for the taxpayers of Ontario, by introducing a saving strategy that provides school boards with more flexibility and helps them to realize savings in the sector. Our goal is to achieve a responsive and effective system in which taxpayers can see value for their investment and children can receive excellence in their education.

Bill 31 represents a significant step forward for the profession of teaching—

Mr Kormos: How can students achieve when their teachers are being fired? How can they get excellence when there are no teachers left?

The Acting Speaker: Order. The member for Welland-Thorold, you're disturbing the House. You really are. I would ask you please to refrain from shouting.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: You leave me with no other choice—

Mr Kormos: Four hundred fifty from Niagara region alone. Why should he not talk about the teachers who are being laid off?

The Acting Speaker: Please. The member for Welland-Thorold, I would ask you just to leave for a few minutes to cool off.

Mr Kormos: No.

The Acting Speaker: No? Then if you won't—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Sergeant, please.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Yes, I name you to leave. I do name you. Please, go. You are named to leave the House.

Mr Kormos left the chamber.

The Acting Speaker: Minister.

Hon Mr Snobelen: Bill 31 represents a significant step forward for the profession of teaching in Ontario and for our system of education. Many eminently qualified people have come to the same conclusion.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Oh, give me a break. No wonder he got kicked out.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Cochrane South, I would ask you to take your seat.

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): Teachers are still being laid off.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. It is the privilege of everyone to have the opportunity to voice your opinion—

Mr Pouliot: Where's the common sense?

The Acting Speaker: The member for Nipigon, I would ask you to refrain from shouting.

1600

Mr Doug Galt (Northumberland): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: While they are interrupting our speaker, I notice the clock is still running. That seems rather unfair. I think that clock should have been stopped.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker: Order. Thank you for your comments, but the clock operates for everyone.

Hon Mr Snobelen: Many eminently qualified people have come to the same conclusion: A self-regulating College of Teachers is essential to improving the quality of education in Ontario. This is an idea whose time has finally come. By giving teachers the power to regulate their own profession, we are putting the responsibility for excellent teaching in the hands of those who are best qualified to know what a teacher should and must be today and in the future.

This initiative will strengthen teaching and will also increase public confidence in education. In creating the Ontario College of Teachers, we are fulfilling two important objectives of this government: We are fulfilling our promise to maintain and improve the quality of education in Ontario, and we are fulfilling our promise to make our education system more accountable to the public for how well our schools prepare our young people. These objectives will be met because it will be teachers who, like other Ontario professionals, will set the standards—

The Acting Speaker: Order. I would ask the members to refrain from discussing too loudly, please. I ask you to cooperate. It's as simple as that.

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker: Order, the member for Cochrane South.

Hon Mr Snobelen: These objectives will be met because it will be teachers who, like other Ontario professionals, will set the standards by which they are trained and by which they practise their profession throughout their careers. In developing this legislation, we have learned from the same basic public policy that characterizes more than 30 other self-regulating professional bodies in Ontario.

With Bill 31, we reify an idea that has been recommended and debated for more than 30 years in Ontario. Starting with the Hall-Dennis commission in 1967 and culminating with the Royal Commission on Learning last year, many task forces on education have recommended the establishment of a College of Teachers. The royal commission's recommendation in its final report, *For the Love of Learning*, was based on consultations with hundreds of individual teachers, with parents and students and taxpayers.

Teachers told the commission that a more coherent approach to teacher education is needed, along with meaningful professional learning opportunities for both new and experienced teachers. Indeed, it is not often we bring forward an initiative for which there has been all-party support. I would like to express appreciation to the former government, which established an Ontario College of Teachers implementation committee, and to members in all parties for their suggestions and for their support.

This new initiative will have important benefits for Ontario's teachers, parents, students and taxpayers. The college will give teachers more say in defining and controlling the quality of professional conduct and practice. The public and students will gain greater confidence in the education system because they will know what standards of performance to expect from teachers and how teachers pursue their own professional development. As part of their professional growth, teachers will be required to develop skills and knowledge throughout their careers. The College of Teachers will establish a process for teachers' ongoing education, recognizing that many of Ontario's teachers are already engaged in these activities.

Now let me turn to what the college's specific responsibilities will be. The college will be a governing council of 31 members, more than half of whom must be qualified teachers. The public will also be represented on the council, ensuring that the college serves the interests of the broader community as well as the professional interests of teachers.

What will this governing council of teachers do? Through the college, teachers will develop standards of what teachers should know and be able to do in a classroom at each stage of their careers. The standards of practice the governing council establishes will apply to all educators who are certified to teach in Ontario. This means all educators, whether working in the classroom or in school administration, will have high standards of professional training and requirements for professional development relevant to their experience and particular assignment.

The college will be responsible for the certification of teachers. The college will be responsible for developing a process of ongoing education for their profession. The college will investigate complaints concerning the professional misconduct of college members. The college will be responsible for the accreditation of pre-service and in-service teacher education programs, ensuring that they meet professional needs. Through the college, teachers will be responsible for accrediting the groups that deliver professional development programs.

While designed for teachers, the college will also have important implications for and accountability to the

public. As is the case with other self-regulating professional bodies, the College of Teachers will have significant public representation on its governing council and committees. The governing council will report annually to the minister and to the Legislature on its activities. Meetings of the council and its disciplinary committees will be open to the public.

As I have said before, excellence in teaching is key to excellence in education. Today we are taking another positive step forward towards that excellence. I look forward to cooperating with my colleagues in the weeks ahead to ensure that the best possible legislation is passed as soon as possible.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I'm quite amazed, at this time when so many front-line teachers in the classroom are being given their pink slips, that the government is spending its time on this particular piece of legislation. In the speech the minister has given, I'm surprised he didn't talk about the fact that the quality of education cannot help but be lowered by the fact that there will be fewer front-line teachers in the classroom to deal with the students. While one can talk about the role and responsibility of the College of Teachers, the primary issue when I talk to parents and students and members of the teaching profession is how many teachers there will be to work with those students, especially those who have special difficulties.

Special education was initiated by this Legislature when the Minister of Education was the Honourable Bette Stephenson, and she at the time indicated how important it was that we have special services for those young people. Subsequently, it was built upon by other ministers of education in the Liberal and NDP governments. We had some good programs, which are quickly disappearing, for those people who are at a disadvantage.

In the long run, I think we recognize that what's going to happen is that those students as they grow up, because they don't have the same access to services that those just a few years ago would have had, are going to present more problems for society than might otherwise be the case—witness junior kindergarten disappearing, witness grade 13 disappearing, witness many of the special programs for those who are disabled in one way or another and want to be part of the process of education in the regular flow of things.

I see nothing this bill will achieve that will help education in our province, and I'm quite surprised that the government would be bringing this legislation forward at this time.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): In line with the comments made by my colleague from St Catharines and my caucusmates, a bit of a surreal atmosphere is created to be discussing this matter in a vacuum when this government is hell-bent on destroying the education system in the province.

The removal of \$400 million in one year from the public education system of the province, which annualized works out to \$1 billion, means the layoff of thousands of teachers. We're seeing, just with four boards recently in southern Ontario, over 4,000 pink slips already issued—just four boards. It is true that perhaps

some of those people will not be finally laid off when the final numbers come through after the end of May—

Mr Bradley: They will be next year, though.

Mr Wildman: Exactly. The government has just said it intends to have further cuts next year—this from a government that said it had no intention of harming classroom education. To be talking about this piece of legislation at a time when the budget for classroom education in the province is being gutted is a little bit silly. I will be speaking later in the debate about the position we have with regard to a self-governing profession, but what is happening to the profession? What's happening out there in the real world? We're seeing many, many teachers being laid off and established programs that have come to be expected by parents and students gutted, and we're discussing this before the Legislature.

1610

The Acting Speaker: Any further questions or comments? If not, Minister, you have two minutes to reply.

Hon Mr Snobelen: First, let me say that I'm somewhat surprised by the comments made by the representative of the official opposition, because I read in this interesting book, the red book, I think it's called, the Ontario Liberal plan that was put out to the people of Ontario before the last election—I read with interest on the bottom of page 42, "A Liberal government will proceed with the creation of a College of Teachers." Perhaps my colleague from across the floor is a little confused today, because it's very clear in this book that this is supported.

As far as the comments from the leader of the third party are concerned, I'm not so surprised. I'm not surprised that the member has a difficulty in understanding doing better for less across the province, and I'm not surprised that the member has trouble with a government that's actually taking on the real-world problems and challenges that face Ontario in an effort to create a future for this province that's worthy of our students. I'm not surprised that the member opposite would ignore that.

What I am surprised by is that the leader of the third party would speak in any way against this act, this College of Teachers. I believe if he asked his colleague from Windsor-Riverside, he would find that there has been support, in fact a lot of activity, to bring a professional college to this province for teachers, that this is a positive move for teachers and for the public and it will lead to greater accountability in our education system. I'm surprised that the leader of the third party would not support that initiative.

The Acting Speaker: Any further debate?

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I would like to seek unanimous consent to have my time shared with my esteemed colleague from Kingston and The Islands this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker: Is there unanimous consent? Agreed.

Mr Patten: I welcome the opportunity to participate in the debate this afternoon on Bill 31. As I have done in the past, I would like to congratulate the members of the implementation committee for a very detailed piece of work. The study and the report that was put forward, The Privilege of Professionalism, is a very good start and a

basis on which we can move forward as we look at the legislation.

The minister comments on his surprise at some questions that were raised by my colleague from St Catharines. I must say to him that yes indeed, all three parties had identified in principle and in concept their agreement with the College of Teachers, but now we come down to on what basis, and what form does it take, and does it live up to the recommendations and the expectations of teachers and people who are concerned about the creation of a sound professional body? That, of course, is where we are at today, where we begin the debate on the details of the legislation as put forward and whether it achieves and addresses the objects of the legislation.

The discussion surrounding the establishment of a self-regulating body for the teaching profession has been quite extensive over the years, indeed for the past 30 years or so. It has been mentioned, for example, in the Hall-Dennis report of 1969; in *Teacher Education in Ontario: Current Practice and Options for the Future*; again in 1987, the Final Report of the Teacher Education Review Steering Committee; and in 1988 again Hall recommended the creation of—I keep referring to this, and I will underline, underline this—a self-regulatory body.

In 1994, *For the Love of Learning: Report of the Royal Commission on Learning* proposed the following:

“Our conviction is that teaching should be a self-governing profession, with greater responsibility and greater autonomy for teachers.” Our caucus agrees with that.

To continue from the report, membership “must include representatives of the public...a majority of the members would be teachers, directly elected by all certified teachers...that no one interest group” should be in a position of control, and that the college should be “separate from and independent of the teachers’ federations.”

The main recommendation from the royal commission was, “That a professional self-regulatory body for teaching, the Ontario College of Teachers, be established, with the powers, duties, and membership of the college set out in legislation.” Of course, that’s where we are today. As we know, it was the recommendations of the royal commission which led us to the current effort to establish a College of Teachers.

I would like to state at the outset, however, that I support in principle the creation of a College of Teachers as a self-regulating body; that this means it is for teachers, by teachers, with significant participation and representation from the public.

Bill 31 represents a significant development in the area of teacher education. To date, there has been considerable debate and discussion over this principle. Debate has centred around, however, the report of the implementation committee. With the tabling of this legislation, now we move into a new area of discussion over whether the legislation in front of us today accomplishes the objectives of an improved mechanism for teachers and for teacher qualifications development in Ontario.

Ontario students will achieve the highest standards only if teachers meet standards that are equally high. The essential role played by teachers in the educational system cannot be underestimated. Because of that, I will

have to share my view with the member for Algoma and the member for St Catharines this afternoon that within the overall context of introducing this legislation is a sense of dread, a sense of fear on behalf of many teachers, especially young teachers and some who have been in the profession only a few years, concerning their future and whether indeed they have one in Ontario.

In that kind of a climate, the member for Algoma mentioned the surrealistic context in which this is introduced, and I have to agree with him. However, I will discipline myself to address the bill but share the view that many teachers are living in a high degree of insecurity.

Teachers must, as we know, be well qualified, and as in any profession, stay up to date throughout their careers. This ongoing professional learning ensures constant renewal in the system, and we all win. We must, of course, support our teachers to have enough time to develop the skills they need to meet the challenging and complex needs of students today and in the future.

I’m particularly pleased that the proposed college would be responsible for the full spectrum of teacher education, from pre-service to in-service training. But I want to set out clearly that the focus must be on the educational and professional development needs of teachers while establishing clear standards of practice for the teaching profession itself. In addition, it is hoped that the College of Teachers, within its disciplinary capacity, will maintain the integrity of a profession that is so important to the future success of our students.

I believe that a College of Teachers should accomplish the following: strengthen teacher education through new initiatives such as internship, extended teacher training, graduate programs and cooperative programs with school boards; expand ongoing teacher education and require teachers to upgrade their certification on a periodic and regular basis; develop a variety of ways that teachers can upgrade their certification, such as peer review and evidence of ongoing professional development; and identify best practices in teaching, in methods, in learning materials and resources, testing techniques, teacher education and the use of technology and promote these usages through such means as computer networks.

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Throughout my discussions and contacts with teachers in the various federations, I have heard, as I am sure many of you have as well, a number of areas of concern with Bill 31 which establishes the College of Teachers, and the first major area has to do with the self-regulating body. What does that mean?

I support a college that is, in the truest sense, self-regulating. This is the case for the British Columbia College of Teachers and for other self-regulating bodies: the Law Society of Upper Canada, the College of Nurses, the College of Physicians and Surgeons etc, and teachers expect no less.

Section 4 of the legislation sets out the composition of the council at 31 members through the following: 17 representatives to be elected by members of the college in accordance with regulations, and 14 are to be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council in accordance with regulations.

The composition of these 17, as outlined in the recommendation of the implementation report, The Privilege of Professionalism, in terms of elections of members, has been a source of concern for many of the representations I have received.

We can look at British Columbia for an example of representation. In BC, 15 of the 20 members—which is 75%—of the governing council are elected classroom teachers, each representing a geographic zone, and each zone representative is elected by members of the college working or living in that particular zone.

While the Royal Commission on Learning cites the concerns that the BC teachers' federations held undue control over the BC college, discussions by my office with Earl Cheerington, who is the acting registrar general of the college, found that in fact this was not a concern—and he is the acting registrar general—there is no undue influence held by the BC teachers' federations in terms of their operation, and I would suspect a good deal of that has to do with the percentage of elected teachers on that particular council, which is 75%.

There are two issues, the first of which pertains to the proportion of the council which is appointed versus the elected. It is felt by teachers in Ontario, by nature and by virtue of their representations, that there is too large a proportion of the council appointed by the Lieutenant Governor, 14 out of 31 or 45%. For a body that is supposed to be self-regulating, that is a very small percentage when we look and compare this to other self-regulating professional bodies. If 10% or 15% of the members are appointed, that would certainly be sufficient representation from the general public and in line with many of the other professional bodies that we have here in Ontario.

The second point pertains to the composition of the elected members of the council. The teachers' federations maintain that the inclusion of representatives from the class of supervisory officers, a representative from a private school and a representative elected from the faculty of education does not guarantee that classroom teachers have a majority on the council.

There is a considerable amount of debate that revolves around this point with respect to the teacher status of the supervisory officer, the representative from a private school and the representative from the faculty of education. Now, I'm aware that the reasoning of this lies in the fact that the college would have an additional 40,000 members who are not part of the Ontario Teachers' Federation.

While this is a worthy point, we need to look at the composition of the 14 Lieutenant Governor appointments. It would contain individuals representing the public and individuals representing other sectors of the educational community in Ontario. Included here, right at the top, are three appointments from the English and from the French faculties of education in Ontario. So it would seem to me that there could be some question over the status of the representatives of education. Are they considered representatives from the broader educational community or are they viewed as teachers?

I think we need to have a discussion about how the composition was arrived at and what it was that was

expected to be accomplished in terms of representation on the council. A key question is the principle of teachers for teachers in terms of their professional development, feeling that they really have a fair degree of control over that mechanism and are prepared to accept the accountability that goes along with it.

Mr Minister, I believe it's important that you move wisely towards a conclusion in passing this legislation. You must not move forward without regard to the views and the input of teachers. As I pointed out to you during discussions in estimates, some teachers get emotional when you say, "You know, I think you're doing a fairly good job." They feel there's a tremendous amount of insecurity in the educational system today. I don't think that severe criticism of teachers all the time brings out the very best in the human condition in a large system when people feel beat up. I think that if they feel there's a high degree of support and there is some acknowledgement of their professionalism and some acknowledgement of the heart they put into their work, this will provide a much greater sense of optimism and enthusiasm.

They want to be part of the process. In terms of the College of Teachers, the issue of a self-regulating body is germane, one in which teachers feel a sense of ownership, not one in which they feel they will be lorded over in an atmosphere of distrust. I would caution you, the Minister of Education and Training, to move cautiously on this particular point and to leave room for flexibility.

A concern has been expressed that classroom teachers are not in a majority on the council and that, as such, the College of Teachers is not self-regulating or self-governing in the full sense of the meaning by teachers. In order for this to be so, classroom teachers should be clearly in a majority. I hope the minister will consider this matter. The minister and I have already spoken about this. However, I want to bring it up once again for the reason that it seems to be the major source of opposition to the college. My suggestion is that an adjustment of a couple of teacher representatives, in favour of teacher representation on the council, might alleviate this particular problem. Possibly there is sufficient room for movement on both sides. I think certainly this is something that has to be addressed.

I'd like to address an area that likewise is of concern. It has to do with the privacy concerns and the powers of investigation and discipline. The issue of powers and investigative powers is an area which this House is very much aware of through the debate on Bill 26, the omnibus bill. There are some very serious concerns that similar issues are at play in this legislation. Whether this is as a result of the manner in which the legislation has been drafted or an explicit desire to confer such powers to the college, we shall have to hear out both sides.

The primary concern with the access-to-personal-information provisions of these bills is that the proposed powers to collect, use and disclose personal information may go beyond what is reasonably necessary to achieve the goal of the bill, thus leading to the erosion of privacy protections. This was, however, the same concern of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, you will recall, in respect to the access-to-personal-information provisions of Bill 26. The exercise of the power is limited only by

the broadly framed objects of the respective bills. This concern was previously articulated by the Information and Privacy Commissioner in respect of Bill 26. It is similarly relevant to the analysis of Bill 31.

In terms of the relevant provisions of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, and likewise the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, they define "personal information" to mean "recorded information about an identifiable individual, including," and they go on to identify eight particular items, items that would be sources of information to be provided to a council, to a committee or the body that would be seeking information. I would like to address and point out four of those items that give me concern, and I present my case before the House in terms of the importance of contesting that this would be required and is necessary under the confines of this bill.

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First, "information relating to the race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation or marital or family status of the individual," under clause 38(a); (b) "information relating to the education or the medical, psychiatric, psychological, criminal or employment history of the individual or information relating to financial transactions in which the individual has been involved"; I'll skip (c) and (d); (e) "the personal opinions or views of the individual except where they relate to another individual"; I'll skip (f) and (g) and go to (h), "the individual's name where it appears with other personal information relating to the individual or where the disclosure of the name would reveal other personal information about the individual." It also includes personal information that is not recorded, that is, information collected orally.

The purposes of the privacy provisions themselves, both privacy acts, are of course to protect the privacy of individuals with respect to personal information about themselves held by institutions and to provide individuals with the right of access to that information.

Part III of the privacy act contains provisions governing the protection of individual privacy, including safeguards relating to the collection, retention, use, disclosure and disposal of personal information held by institutions.

Under section 44 of Bill 31, what does it say? Under subsection 44(1) it says, "For the purpose of carrying out its objects, the college may require the provincial schools authority, a school board or any person or body designated by the regulations to provide the college with information, including personal information within the meaning of...the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act or under section 28 of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, in respect of members of the college."

Then under 44(5), "If required by the college for the purpose of carrying out its objects, the minister may provide to the collection information, including personal information within the meaning of section 38." It goes on under 44(6), "For the purpose of carrying out his or her duties under the Education Act, the minister has the authority to collect from the college information, including personal information within the meaning of section 38 of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy

Act, in respect of its members, former members and applicants for membership."

I contend that the information is overly broad and that the powers are really not justifiable. The Information and Privacy Commissioner noted the overreaching nature of similar provisions in Bill 26. His concern, as expressed in the attached written submission to the standing committee on general government was, "With the sweeping powers these amendments provide, there arises the danger that health care information may be collected, used and disclosed beyond what is reasonably necessary to achieve the goal of reducing health care fraud."

This same concern exists with respect to Bill 31. The only limitation on the power to access and use personal information in the bill is provided by the broadly drafted legislative objects, and I contend that this is a weak limitation, as the list of objects is even less clearly defined than the goals in Bill 26; for example, in Bill 26, of reducing the potential for health care fraud. As we know, Bill 26 was amended as a result of this information and this intervention by the privacy commissioner, and therefore it begs the question as to why this section of Bill 31 is there. I think it's clear that an amendment to remove section 44 of Bill 31 would be in order.

The need for such powers has not been clearly established. Currently, there is no similar provision in the statutes governing other self-governing bodies, such as under the Law Society Act or the Regulated Health Professions Act. These bodies have similar objects, including investigation and the discipline of members, but there is nothing in the Education Act requiring disclosure of personal information as is proposed with section 44 of Bill 31.

Other statutes do provide a similar, though more constrained, right of access to personal information. For example, the Family Support Plan Act allows a director, for the purpose of enforcing a support or custody order, to obtain personal information from other institutions. The Workers' Compensation Act gives the Workers' Compensation Board the power, subject to the approval of the Lieutenant Governor in Council, for the purpose of administering the act, to enter into agreements with other institutions to allow and give access to information held by the institution.

Under the area of confidentiality, section 45 of Bill 31 contains a confidentiality provision. It provides that persons engaged in the administration of the act shall preserve the secrecy of all matters that come to their knowledge in the course of their duties. This, however, does not provide justification for section 44 of the bill, I would contend.

In terms of disciplinary hearings under Bill 31, section 26, the discipline committee, a committee of the college, of course, is authorized to conduct public hearings to determine whether a member is guilty of professional misconduct or incompetence. The hearing will be public unless the discipline committee is satisfied that financial or personal matters may be disclosed.

These matters must be of such a nature that the desirability of avoiding public disclosure of them in the interest of any person affected, or in the public interest, outweighs the desirability of adhering to the principle that

hearings be public. Thus, hearings will be held in public unless the affected person, the teacher, can satisfy the committee that their interest in keeping the information private outweighs the need for a public hearing.

In other words, the onus is on the affected person, and the decision to hold the hearing in camera is at the discretion of the committee. In my opinion, this bill should state that the council will exclude the public from a meeting when the meeting deals with a disciplinary matter. I do not support the notion of dealing with such matters in a wide open display that leaves little or no room for the protection of an innocent individual's reputation.

Any complaint about a teacher should first go through the normal channels to the school principal and to the superintendent. If the complaint is serious enough, or the person making the complaint is not satisfied, then he or she may go to the council. There is the potential for the council to spend far too much time investigating complaints that prove to be unfounded or frivolous, or that complaints do not relate to professional misconduct or to competence.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: It's my understanding that while a critic is responding—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): What is your point of order?

Mr Gerretsen: I'm trying to explain that to you, Mr Speaker. While a critic is responding to comments that the minister made on second reading of a bill, it is customary for either the minister or the parliamentary assistant to that minister to be in the House. Neither one is here, and I wonder if you could rule on that. My colleague has some very important information to convey to the minister and to the PA about this matter, and there's no one here from the department to—

The Deputy Speaker: There is no requirement that he be in the House. There is no point of order.

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Mr Patten: I'd like to thank my colleague. I see the parliamentary assistant arriving in the chamber to listen to the debate and to respect the views of those who have considered very carefully the nature of the legislation that is before us. I want to thank my colleague for pointing out that fact.

If I may continue, I would like to also say that the council for the College of Teachers should only deal with very serious complaints that have some substance to them. It seems to me that this section gives far too much power to the council and the registrar of the college. If it is necessary to break down a door, search a home, seize materials, usually in daylight, it is certainly the time to have the professional law enforcement officers conducting the activity. This is no place for elected or appointed members of the council.

Under subparagraph ii of paragraph 3 of subsection 28(4), where it says "periodic inspections by the committee or its delegate," this council should work closely with the school principals, with the school boards. It is the principal who works daily with his or her teachers and who knows the situations in the various classrooms.

I am very concerned about, and I quote the section, "or its delegate." Who will this be? Will it be a professional

educator, a principal, someone off the street, a friend? We don't know. We will debate this of course in committee.

I'm just trying to point out a variety of areas where I believe there should be some amendment to this legislation. Under section 34:

"(1) A justice of the peace may, on the application of an investigator, issue a warrant authorizing the investigator to enter and search a place....

"(2) A warrant...does not authorize an entry or search after sunset and before sunrise unless it is expressly stated in the warrant."

Under section 35, "An investigator may remove a document or object...."

Many of these things need to be questioned.

There's another section under section 28, clause 28(3)(b), which deals with a basis for disciplinary action. Physical or mental conditions are listed as grounds for designating a member incompetent and subject to disciplinary action. This provision I view as overly harsh. Equating a physical or mental disability with inappropriate conduct is not the same thing. It has been suggested that the term "incapacity," as is found under the Regulated Health Professions Act, may be a better designation for such a condition. This would remove the negative stigma associated with discipline. Rewording should be pursued on this.

In terms of vacancies and how those might be dealt with, under sections 7 and 15, "Where one or more vacancies occur in the membership of the council"—or a committee—"the members remaining in office constitute the council so long as their number is not fewer than a quorum."

Paragraph 7 of subsection 37(1)—"governing the filling of vacancies created on the council by the departure of elected members of the council"—the only provision for filling vacancies would be left up to regulations, which is linked to quorum being met without any definition in the legislation so far as to what that quorum is. What that means of course is that teachers could lose a majority of seats on either of the bodies in between elections, due to attrition, due to illness or for whatever circumstances. The provision of vacancies and replacement of positions on the council needs to be addressed.

In British Columbia, the College of Teachers sets out provisions for by-elections in section 12 of its act and prescribes a quorum of the council. In this particular legislation, the actual quorum level is not set out in the act. There is no quorum provision for the committee of the college. The act only speaks to the minimum number of council members who are to sit on committees and to the minimum number who are to come from the elected and appointed members. The British Columbia College of Teachers sets out a quorum in the bylaws of the college.

I hope that the minister will take some of these as examples of some of the recommendations that need to be addressed in terms of amendments to Bill 31, that these will be seen as constructive recommendations to enhance what is there, to address the concerns that many teachers have.

There is a historical basis of consideration of considerable thought on this matter, and the government should

show flexibility on the issue and concerns that have been raised. In doing so, it can demonstrate maturity in addressing the makeup of this college, for in the final analysis, to remove some of the provisions of this bill will show trust, and only through trust can you have trust.

The government needs to move cautiously and optimistically. I hope that the minister will be referring this legislation to committee and will listen to all sides of the debate and that there will be time to review the concerns and the thoughts and the reactions of teachers, for in the final analysis, it is the teachers whose interests are paramount with this bill, and if they feel that this is not an encouragement towards their professionalism, then this would not be a good start indeed as a next step to help strengthen the quality of teaching in Ontario.

I urge the minister to show flexibility, to enable the teachers to attend hearings and to address the bill, as they will, in the most responsible manner.

At this time I'd like to pass over to my colleague the member for Kingston and The Islands the additional part of my time.

Mr Gerretsen: Let me first of all state that we're once again dealing with a situation that deals with optics rather than something that's really happening or really changing. It's very much like Bill 20, which the government sold on the basis that it was going to move the development industry along a lot quicker by changing some time frames etc, but really nothing is changed at all. It's very much like this bill as well.

We're dealing here with the establishment of a college for teachers etc, which I think there's widespread agreement on, except perhaps for the teachers' federations. Undoubtedly we'll hear from them; we ought to hear from them and we ought to have an open mind when we have our hearings on this matter. But from what I've heard so far publicly from the three parties in the Legislature, there seems to be some sort of consensus that the notion of a College of Teachers is warranted.

But it doesn't deal with the real situation as to what's happening in the educational system right now, and that is the number of teachers who are getting pink slips and the number of teachers who are once again going to graduate from our teaching colleges in the next couple of months who will be unemployed. I'm sure we all know teachers who graduated three, four, five years ago who are still unemployed, who have maybe had some occasional work since that time, are maybe doing some part-time teaching or some supply teaching etc, but these are young people who literally have not been able to get into their profession.

Undoubtedly it will be a lot tougher from here on in, because when you take \$400 million out of the system—and we can all play games with the fact that, “We're not taking it out of the classroom system; we're taking it out of administration etc.” From an individual board's perspective, if it has less money to spend and if we're going to make it responsible for carrying out the educational functions within its board operations, it's going to decide how many teachers are going to be employed. If you give them less money to work with, obviously there will be fewer teachers in our system, obviously class sizes will increase and the people we're really doing all this for, the

youngsters of this province, will in effect suffer as a result thereof.

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Rather than dealing with that situation, rather than dealing with the commitment the government made when it was on the election trail in May last year and stated, “We will not take any money out of classroom funding,” we're dealing here with the notion of setting up a college of teachers. As laudatory as that may be, it is just not dealing with the real problems in education today.

We all know what the hidden agenda is; we all realize that. The hidden agenda is to be involved in some sort of a wealth distribution in this province where we've already taken money from the most vulnerable and the poorest people in this province, whether it's through welfare cuts, whether it's through services that are no longer available, whether it's through the closing of halfway houses, you could just go on and on and on—

Interjection: That was the last government.

Mr Gerretsen: What do you mean it's the last government? It's your government that closed all the halfway houses etc.

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): That's socialism. Redistribution.

Mr Gerretsen: The rehabilitation of offenders has nothing to do with socialism or capitalism. It deals with the reality of the situation, what happens with people after they've served their time and whether or not you want them to make a useful contribution in our society from then on. The only way you're going to do that is through some sort of rehabilitation program.

In any event, what's happening is that money is taken away from these lower sectors in society, from the most vulnerable in our society for only one purpose, and that purpose is to give a tax cut to the wealthier in this province. If the government at least had the courage of its convictions and admitted that's what the hidden agenda is, that it's out there for everyone to see, then at least I would respect them to that extent. But basically they're still holding on to this notion that no, it's not costing anybody anything.

Their economic statement of November 29 clearly indicated that the debt of this province is going to rise over the next four to five years from \$95 billion, where it currently stands, to over \$120 billion, an increase of some \$20 billion to \$25 billion, which just happens to equate the amount of the tax cut. That's really what this is all about. It's not about setting up a College of Teachers. We're throwing in that issue to get some favourable press out there so the people of Ontario will think, “Well, maybe these people are doing something in this area,” without really dealing with the problems taking place in our education system right now.

On the bill specifically I find, in reading it over the last few days since it was given first reading, there are some very interesting sections in it dealing with the powers of the registrar. My colleague has already mentioned some concerns we have with respect to powers. Maybe it's my legal training or whatever you want to call it, but I am always very wary of giving more powers, particularly discretionary powers, to individuals or organizations, because they can be misused. That's not to

say they are going to be misused by anyone in particular but they have the potential of being misused. The one thing that certainly makes us different as a democracy is the fact that we want to curtail the discretionary powers that people have.

When you look at part VIII, "Registrar's Powers of Investigation," you would probably say if the registrar is going to do his job and if there are going to be disciplinary hearings, there needs to be a power of investigation; most people would agree with that.

However, section 33 states:

"Where the registrar believes on reasonable and probable grounds,

"(a) that a member has committed an act of professional misconduct or is incompetent;

"(b) that there is cause to refuse to issue a certificate applied for...

"(c) that there is cause to suspend or revoke a certificate...the registrar may appoint one or more investigators to investigate whether such act has occurred."

What I find very curious about that is that the preamble to this section states if "the registrar believes on reasonable and probable grounds" that one of these things has happened. It seems to me there shouldn't be any discretion on his part at that point in time as to whether or not an investigator is going to be appointed. If he really believes, on reasonable and probable grounds, that something like this has occurred, then I think the registrar ought to appoint an investigator to determine whether or not those reasonable grounds that the registrar has in his or her mind do actually exist.

What this is really saying is that the registrar could very well believe in certain circumstances that one of these four matters has occurred and still not appoint an investigator. That, to my way of thinking, just isn't right. If the registrar truly believes, on reasonable and probable grounds, that a particular situation has happened, then that registrar ought to investigate that, and there should not be any discretion at that point in time as to whether to investigate it or not.

The other issue that is of some interest deals with this whole notion of the disciplinary hearings. My colleague made some reference to that earlier, but I would just like to repeat that because I think it's a question of where we place the onus in this particular matter. It all deals with whether or not a hearing ought to be held in private or in public. Let me, at the outset, say that I think, generally speaking, people would agree that hearings of any kind of judicial or quasi-judicial nature ought to take place in public. People have a right to know what's going on.

However, we're dealing here with a situation that I think is a little bit different than that. We're dealing here with a situation in which a person's professional conduct, or misconduct, is brought into question and, as the bill states, the hearing will be public unless the discipline committee is satisfied that "financial or personal or other matters may be disclosed at the hearing of such a nature that the desirability of avoiding public disclosure of them in the interest of any person affected or in the public interest outweighs the desirability of adhering to the principle that hearings be open to the public." Thus such hearings should be held in public unless the affected

person can satisfy the committee that their interest in keeping the information private outweighs the need for a public hearing. The onus, as I've indicated before, is on the affected person and the decision to hold the hearing in camera is in the discretion of the committee.

If it's completely in the discretion of the committee, it seems to me that there may very well be situations where the affected person may be denied this service. To completely place the onus on that person to convince the committee that it ought to be held in camera may not be justified. It is my view that in a case of professional misconduct such hearings ought to be held in private unless it can be proven that by making them public it will not infringe on the benefits of innocence until proven guilty. In other words, I think that the onus ought to sit the other way, because I think we've all heard of situations where somebody's reputation and somebody's professional competence can be not only challenged but very quickly affected in a negative way if matters that are later on proven to be not correct come out in the public view without their say in the matter.

Since the college deals only with professional misconduct and not with criminal prosecution, it should only render public its decision to strip a member of his or her membership into college. Criminal charges would be made public upon criminal conviction in a court of law. Obviously, if there are criminal charges that come out of this kind of a situation, then the criminal courts ought to deal with them.

There are other powers in part VIII of the act as well that, in my opinion, simply give the registrar too much power to carry out an investigation, and too much power without the person that's going to be affected by it being able, early enough in the game, as it were, to do something about that investigation. This is a matter I hope the committee will take a good look at and that undoubtedly we will be hearing some presentations on as well.

1700

It's a little bit like Bill 20. It's taking the approach that the new bureaucracy that is being set up is being given, in my opinion, powers that go beyond the reasonable powers that ought to be given under those circumstances in order for them to effectively carry out the function of their undertaking.

It is my belief, and I'm sure this is shared by some members in the chamber as well, that in order for us to fully understand the impact of particularly the investigation and the discipline sections of this act, there has to be a full and public debate, particularly by those individuals and organizations that may be affected by it.

I therefore hope that not only those matters I'm particularly interested in but also other sections, such as dealing with the membership of the college itself—I know there are many good arguments that can be made to make sure that the majority of the members are in effect members of the teaching profession. It's very interesting that other boards and organizations that were almost completely dominated by members within a profession, such as the legal profession for example, have over the years had more and more lay representation on them, and I'm not so sure whether or not the general trend of membership to self-regulating bodies and organizations

isn't away from almost exclusive membership of members that are involved in that particular organization or association.

I simply will wind up by saying it's unfortunate we are not here to discuss the real problems in education. The real problems deal with matters such as class size, deal with matters such as the tremendous unemployment situation that exists among the teaching profession in our province, that undoubtedly will get worse as the \$400 million that is being cut away from the education budgets of the school boards of this province takes effect, and that we're dealing with a matter that, to my way of thinking, is more optics than anything else.

Let's deal with the real issues that confront this province, whether it's education, whether it's health care or social services. It seems to me that this bill just isn't doing it. We will have public hearings on it, so I understand, and it's my hope that during that period of time all of those different individuals and organizations, including the teachers' federations, that want to make presentations will come forward so that there can be a full and open debate on these particular matters.

The Deputy Speaker: Questions and comments?

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): I wish to compliment the members for Ottawa Centre and Kingston and The Islands for the presentations they put forward this afternoon. I've found their presentations to be very thought-provoking. In fact, I've heard from a great number of teachers in Wellington county about some of their concerns about the education system, and I'll leave my comments on the whole range of issues to another day, but speak directly to this bill today.

Many teachers in Wellington county are very concerned about this bill, and I think a poll was taken and in excess of 90% of the teachers in Wellington county were opposed to the bill as it presently stands. It's my view that if that's the case there may very well be problems within this bill that should be addressed.

I've worked and met extensively with teachers in Wellington county to discuss this bill, and I find that some of their concerns, in my view, are valid ones. I wish to share with the House some comments that I gave to the minister back in November on this issue: "It is my own view that a College of Teachers, with a mandate to improve educational outcomes, would enhance the professional status of teachers.

"However, many teachers have expressed their strong reservations to me about the formation of a college. I believe it is extremely important that you consult with teachers and solicit their comments and views before moving forward on a College of Teachers. It is extremely important that the government seek the advice of teachers on the creation of such a body, taking into consideration their ideas and concerns.

I go on to say: "I would suggest that it would be wise to draw on teachers' knowledge and practical experience about what educational techniques and strategies are effective in the classroom, and what improvements can and should be made. In this regard, I strongly believe that a majority of the board for the College of Teachers should be made up of active classroom teachers. It is

extremely important to place authority in the hands of classroom teachers, because they have a practical, current and hands-on understanding of educational challenges, techniques and problems."

So I would like to indicate my support for one of the points that came forward from the opposition side, that the governing council should be comprised of a majority of active classroom teachers. I feel very strongly in that regard. I would encourage the minister to give consideration to sending this bill to a standing committee of the Legislature for full public hearings so that we can bring forward a bill that is acceptable to teachers.

Mr Gerretsen: I certainly would like to respond to the member for Wellington. You know, it's nice to see, after having been in this place for some eight months, that there is at least one out of the 82 Tory members who is actually willing to say something to improve a situation and to actually take on his own government on not only this issue, but also regarding the tax cut as being a reckless proposition. I urge you to make that letter public to all of the members of the House and to the media as well. It's very refreshing to actually meet a Tory—and there are many good people here, even on the government side. Unfortunately—

Mr Bob Wood (London South): Name names.

Mr Gerretsen: Name them? That would take too long. You're all good people. The problem is that none of you think for yourself except for that member for Wellington. I think he ought to be congratulated on taking it up for the teachers, on calling the tax cut reckless—and it's something that I've had the privilege of quoting on at least five or six occasions during the past week or so. I will tell you, in eastern Ontario you are held in great esteem. As I go around, they say, "You mean there's actually one Tory who thinks up there?" I say: "Yes. I've met him. He's actually written the Premier a couple of letters in which he is at least questioning some of the things that are going on."

I see my friend from Bruce-Owen Sound.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): Grey-Owen Sound.

Mr Gerretsen: Grey-Owen Sound. I have great hopes for him too, because he shows at times a bit of individuality, and of course the caucus chair there, but of course now she's been muzzled because of the elevated position she holds within your party.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): Me? Muzzled? Are you kidding?

Mr Gerretsen: Well, they're all hoping so. At least I hope the committee will take a look at all these various suggestions, and I hope you're a member of this committee so that we can have some more of your insights into these matters.

The Deputy Speaker: I would like to address the member for Grey-Owen Sound. I didn't see you. You may ask for unanimous consent. I think that would be the only way you could take your time.

Interjections: Agreed.

Mr Murdoch: I appreciate that, Mr Speaker. Thank you very much. I was going to speak on the two minutes on what the two members across the way just spoke on,

Bill 31. I was going to mention a lot of things my friend from Wellington said, that we do have some concerns with this bill but there are some good things about it too.

I've talked to a lot of teachers in my riding and they have grave concerns with this bill. I hope their concerns can be addressed here in this House, because—

Mr Wildman: In your riding there are a lot of grey areas.

Mr Murdoch: That's right; there are a lot of grey areas in our riding. That's true.

As I was saying, the teachers have concerns about this bill. I think we have to hear and listen to their concerns and we don't want this bill to go forward too fast. I hope that it will go to a standing committee so that they will get a chance to come to the various places that the committee will go and to address their concerns and be able to tell us what they think should happen.

One of the things you talked about over on the other side is that we need teachers on this board. We certainly do need that, and they have to have the majority on this board so that they do have a lot to say when this College of Teachers is formed.

1710

I think we need to talk a lot about this. I'm certainly looking forward to hearing what my other colleagues in the House have to say about this because, as I said, there are a lot of things at stake here. The education of our kids is very important. If we're going to do it properly in this province, we have to make some changes, but let's make the changes right and let's do it together. It's one of the few times I've sat in this House—I haven't been here that long, but I've been here for six years—that all three parties have agreed on something. You've got to agree with me that we've not always agreed, but I'd like to see that this time. We also have got to talk together on this and bring the people in who have a big stake with the college of teachers.

I'm glad to hear our colleagues across the floor talk about it, and we're certainly looking forward to your concerns, your comments, so that when the College of Teachers is finally done and this bill is passed, we have everyone's concerns addressed and we will have a good bill to help education in this province.

Mrs Marland: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I feel it's important for me to rise in my place and advise the member for Kingston and The Islands that indeed the new Premier does not muzzle the members.

The Deputy Speaker: Your point of order?

Mrs Marland: I would like to assure him that I am not in any way muzzled. I feel as free to speak now, as chair of caucus, as I ever did in opposition. I'm proud of our new Premier and his ability to receive our input, and the example of the letter from my friend the member for Wellington confirms that.

The Deputy Speaker: There is no point of order.

Mr Bisson: On a point of order, Mr Speaker: In light of the comments made by my friend across the way, I just want to contest that yes, the Premier does muzzle the backbenchers. There's no question about that.

The Deputy Speaker: There is no point. Further debate?

Mr Wildman: Unfortunately, Speaker, you're quite correct: In many cases in this House whenever there are exchanges across the way, there is no point.

Just in starting off, I would like to make the observation that the member for Wentworth North, the parliamentary assistant who is responsible, as I understand it, for elementary and secondary levels, is here with us, and I appreciate that. I know it would be out of order for me to comment on the presence or absence of the minister, so I won't comment on that.

Mr Gerretsen: Is he here?

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): If he's here, he's invisible.

Mr Wildman: I'm sure all of us would agree that it would be most appropriate for the minister to be here to listen to the debate, at least the leadoffs for the opposition parties, to get an understanding of what the opposition's views might be with regard to the first piece of legislation he is bringing before this House for debate. I'm sure he would feel that he should be here, so I know that he is with us in spirit, if not physically.

I also listened with care to the comments my friend the member for Wellington made. I appreciate them because I've known Mr Arnott, the member for Wellington, for some years, and I've always considered him a thoughtful person, perhaps in the mould of his predecessor, whom I'm sure he would consider it a compliment to be compared to.

He is very thoughtful and never reckless, so I would like to know if the document from which he was quoting in his comments is a public document, whether or not his views with regard to this piece of legislation and what might be required in order to make it even better than it is in draft form now, as presented to the House—I'd really like to know whether this is a public document. I noticed after his comments that the member for Wellington delivered the document to the Hansard table so that it could be properly quoted to avoid any mistakes. I really would like the member to consider seriously tabling the document with the Clerk so we could all see exactly the context within which the quote is delivered so we would know exactly what his views are.

I said a few moments ago when the minister was in his place—and I'm not commenting on the fact that he is not in his place now, because that would be unparliamentary—that I thought it was most unfortunate that we are debating this piece of legislation at a time when the minister has just introduced to the House legislation designed to make it possible for the government to go forward with major cuts in education, cuts that I believe will seriously affect classroom education in the province.

Speaker, you will know that this government has already announced a total of \$432 million in cuts to the education sector, and the government has also indicated that it expects to have further cuts to the education sector. That \$432 million, I would point out, is directed only to elementary and secondary levels; it does not count the additional \$430 million that the government has cut from post-secondary education in the province.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): What did they promise?

Mr Wildman: My colleague asked me, "What did they promise?" I know I don't have to remind you, Speaker, that the Conservative Party, when it was running in the election campaign, made it very clear that all the people of Ontario could trust it not to harm classroom education, that classroom education would be protected in this province; that there would be administrative cuts, cuts of fat, that the boards would be required to eliminate all the out-of-classroom expenditures that could be identified as unnecessary, but that there would be no cuts to classroom education.

That's why I'm mystified that we're debating Bill 31 at a time when the minister is carrying out a program that inevitably will mean that large numbers of teachers will be laid off in this province. There's no question that somewhere in the neighbourhood of 10,000 to 15,000 teachers in this province will lose their positions this year because of cuts in funding from this government.

I suppose some people in Toronto might feel complacent about that, saying, "Of course that only affects boards that receive grants from the provincial government," that the Metro Toronto region is protected from this because the board of education does not receive grants from the provincial government. That is also the case, I might point out, in Ottawa; the Ottawa Board of Education does not receive grants from the provincial government either. The reason, for those who don't understand—I digress a little—is that the assessment levels are much higher in these two urban centres than they are in the rest of the province. It's true that the Toronto Board of Education has been hit with a number of assessment appeals which have been successful and have meant they are receiving less in property taxes from large bank towers downtown. All these banks, of course, are in such financial trouble that they have to protect their situation in terms of property taxes. But even with those changes in assessment, the city of Toronto is in a much stronger position with regard to commercial and industrial property taxes than are most of the boards in the province, so they don't receive any grants, and neither does the Ottawa board.

But we will know, in terms of the other piece of legislation the minister has just introduced into the House, that this government, for the first time in history, is going to legislate a clawback of a portion of the property taxes from the people of Toronto and the people of Ottawa, so their property taxes will go to help fund the operations of this government here. Of course those people are already paying a good portion of their incomes in income taxes and sales taxes and other types of taxes, so they're being hit with a double whammy. But I know that's not directly addressed in this legislation we're talking about today.

1720

My concern is that we are discussing Bill 31, the College of Teachers, at a time when we're laying off so many teachers. The government is wont to say: "Well, we're not laying them off. That's being done by the boards." But they understand that even the public boards in Ottawa and Toronto will be faced with cuts because of the legislation that the government is bringing down. We are seeing the devastation of the junior kindergarten

program, we're seeing changes in the way that adult education is funded, and what are we debating as the top priority for this government in education? The College of Teachers.

It must seem rather strange to teachers to see this kind of priority given at a time they don't know whether they're going to have any jobs. And teachers I know are as concerned about their charges, the pupils in their classrooms, as they are about their own jobs, because that's why they're teachers. They are very concerned about classroom education and they're very concerned that this Conservative government has broken one of the central promises on which it was elected, that it would not harm classroom education.

Having said that, I want to deal specifically with the matter at hand under Bill 31, the establishment of the Ontario College of Teachers, a self-governing body for teachers in the province. As we all know, this legislation follows a commitment made by the previous government, our government, in response to the Royal Commission on Learning. This has been something that has been debated and discussed from time to time over the years in Ontario, whether or not the teaching profession should be self-governing and how that might be achieved. There's been discussion among educators, discussion among bureaucrats and politicians over many years about this issue, and it has been quite controversial.

In theory, in philosophy, most people would accept the view that the teaching profession, just like other professions, should be self-governing. Obviously, our party will be supporting this legislation, as it is in line with the initiatives that we took.

Having said that, I want to make clear that we are determined that the government should agree, and I hope that they are prepared to agree—I understand they will—to hold hearings so that all of the interested parties will be able to come forward and put forward their views on the College of Teachers in general and specifically on the clauses of Bill 31, to make suggestions about how the bill might be improved to better serve the profession that it is designed to make self-governing.

Under Bill 31, the college has responsibilities that are similar to other professional bodies in the province: setting standards for the practice of teachers, coordinating and monitoring professional learning, disciplining members for professional misconduct or incompetence, and regulating teachers' qualifications.

It's been suggested that this legislation really brings teaching and the teaching profession into line with other professions, such as the regulated health professions, in this province. As we know, there's legislation that deals with all of those professions, as well as engineers and others, that makes it possible for those professions to control their own affairs, to deal with these aspects of professionalism and professional development and ensuring that the standards that everyone expects from a profession can be maintained.

I think it's important, though, that we recognize, as was suggested by my friend from Wellington and my friend from Grey-Owen Sound, that there are a number of teachers, a very large number of teachers, who are very concerned about certain aspects of this proposal and

about aspects of the bill. I think it's very important that we recognize that work has to be done so that everyone can understand the components of the legislation and understand why the legislation is designed as it is.

I think my friend from Kingston and The Islands said in his presentation that everybody was in favour of this legislation except the teachers' federations. Well, I guess there is some truth in that.

Mr Gerretsen: Thank you.

Mr Wildman: I wasn't suggesting that you wouldn't tell the truth; I was just saying that it is a rather unusual situation where we are bringing forward legislation that all of us in this House support, all the parties support, for which there is general support I think in the public of the people who are interested in this matter, and yet the teachers' organizations themselves have expressed serious concern, both to our government when we were in government and to the Conservative government.

Some of the federations have argued that the legislation is unnecessary because the Ontario Teachers' Federation carries out most of the functions that are being proposed by the college, certainly in regard to discipline. They've also argued about the costs and how they will have to pay a certain portion of their paycheque, a small portion, to pay for the implementation and operation of the college.

I'm not sure that those are the central issues that are concerning teachers, however. I think what is bothering them the most is that the self-governance that is proposed in the legislation is not provided in a way that they think is acceptable. They think there are inadequacies in this legislation.

One of them has been spoken to by a number of members and that is the makeup of the council. Seventeen of the members of the council are to be elected to represent the teaching profession, people who hold teaching certificates in the province, and 14 are to be appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council. So the implementation committee, which I see is represented here today, has pointed out, and the minister has pointed out, that 17 and 14, there's a majority of people with teaching certificates who will be elected to the council and therefore this is a situation that the federation should be happy with.

Federations have argued that three of the 17 are non-teaching—one's supervisory, one's for private schools—and as a result of that they don't have a majority and this is not the same as other professions which are self-governing in the province—they point to the College of Physicians and Surgeons, for instance—and they've raised concerns about this.

Obviously, if the matter is sent to committee, we'll be able to hear the views of the implementation committee, we'll be able to hear the views of the ministry legal people and the bureaucrats, we'll be able to hear the views of all of the representatives of the teachers in the province, the federations, the OTF, and they'll be able to make the arguments around this and hopefully we'll be able to come to some agreement as to how section 4 could be properly designed to resolve this particular matter. I don't think it's one that should be central or

paramount in determining whether or not the legislation should be supported.

There are other issues, though, that are of concern that the federations have raised. For instance, in section 12 the minister has the power, it appears, to issue orders to the council, and if they are not carried out, the minister can then bring an order in council and pass a regulation within 60 days. Many of the federations have raised questions about the independence of the council because of this. They point to the Regulated Health Professions Act and argue that in that legislation the applicable minister can make requests of the self-governing bodies, but the minister then cannot require, through the hammer of regulation, that the body go forward.

1730

I'm not quite sure of that. I've read the Regulated Health Professions Act, I've looked at it, and I don't see the same difference that is being suggested by some of the federations. But I don't pretend to be a legal beagle, and so I would like to hear the views of those people who have more legal expertise than I in this matter.

Also, the questions around discipline: In subsection 25(8), it's been suggested that there should be provision for the right for an individual to have a hearing and that that should not be denied, as it appears to be. Again, this is a matter that is of significance, obviously, for the teachers, and I think that we should be able to hear their views and hear the views of others who are experienced with the other pieces of legislation for other professionals and determine in what way we could try to alleviate the concerns of the teaching profession.

In the same way, under clause 28(3)(b), where there is provision made for the removal of a teaching certificate because of mental incapacity, perhaps it would be helpful if we looked very carefully at the Regulated Health Professions Act again and substituted the wording that is used under that piece of legislation for the wording that is proposed in this piece of legislation.

There have been particular concerns raised on sections 33 and 34 about search and seizure powers. It's clear from my reading of the Regulated Health Professions Act and the College of Teachers, Bill 31, that similar wording is in both pieces of legislation. Some teachers have argued that the situation is different because, unlike physicians, generally teachers have an employer that is responsible for carrying out investigations into accusations of professional misconduct or incompetence and that the employer has access to records, that there are established procedures for dealing with these matters and that we should not have to establish what many teachers have said are possibly onerous provisions in the law to allow for search and seizure of records. They've also raised questions about why there would be the possibility of carrying out these kinds of actions at night; what it means to have "other persons," since it's undefined and so on. But again, I emphasize that these things are similar to the Regulated Health Professions Act, and I think they're pretty standard in these matters.

Obviously, the teachers are concerned about when these provisions might be used and what would cause them to be used. I think that's understandable. I hope that

as we go through the committee we will be able to analyse this not just in comparison to the Regulated Health Professions Act but look at it in terms of when the powers might be required, when they might be used, for what purposes, and be able to allay a number of the fears of the teaching profession in this regard.

I've had some serious concerns expressed to me about the protection of personal privacy in this whole process. There are teachers who are concerned that section 44 in the legislation, subsections (1), (2) and (6) in particular, appears to override existing legislation designed to protect confidentiality. I would like that clarified.

Obviously, if we're talking about serious misconduct, we want to ensure that we can properly protect our students—or other members of staff, I suppose. We want to ensure that and that must be our first priority. Some have said we shouldn't be concerned about that, that we don't need this kind of legislation because there is already provision for the children's aid society or for the police to become involved if there are serious issues related to misconduct that might harm a student, that might mean physical or emotional damage to the child. I don't subscribe to that.

At the same time, though, I am concerned about the suggestions that have been made about the provision for protection of privacy for the teacher who might be accused. I suppose I should indicate some bias here in that I am a former teacher and my wife is a member of the teaching profession. I've been doing this much longer, more than double the time I was a teacher, but I do have some connections with members of the teaching profession, some quite close.

Interjection.

Mr Wildman: Yes, particularly my wife. We all must take very seriously the concern that in protecting our students, which is the paramount concern, and protecting the integrity of the teaching profession, which is also very important, we also must ensure that the individual and the individual's confidentiality should be protected where possible.

All of us will remember or will have seen cases where individual members of the teaching profession have been wrongly accused. While they may have been vindicated in the end, there are still many people whose reputation may have been harmed because of that kind of process, a process that currently does not involve the college. Obviously, it involves the outside agencies I mentioned and the Ontario Teachers' Federation.

The other side of the coin—I'm trying to be fair about this—is that there have been a couple of cases recently, in the last few months, where individual members of the teaching profession have been accused of very serious misconduct. While the OTF, I believe, has a very good record in terms of dealing with disciplinary issues in general, in a couple of cases—and there are only a couple I am aware of—the minister has not acted and an individual has gone back into the classroom. I don't know the details of those particular cases, I haven't studied them in depth, but it does concern me.

Ultimately, this is a balance, and it's a difficult balance, and it will be difficult for the members of the

college and the committees that will deal with this. In achieving that balance, though, we have to ensure that we have the support of the people who are going to be directly involved. They have to have confidence that they will be dealt with fairly and that they do have a significant say, a controlling say really, in the operation.

1740

As a result, I think we have to look very seriously at the concerns that have been raised by members of the teaching profession with regard to the specifics of the legislation, the role of the minister, the makeup of the college—the council—and how it's going to operate.

I must say, in supporting the legislation, it does strike me as passing strange that all of us in this House, or at least the three parties, are supporting this legislation, ostensibly to help the teaching profession, against the wishes of many in the teaching profession. That does seem a little odd and I find myself feeling a little bit strange about it. I hope that in passing the legislation we will listen very seriously to the concerns raised by the federations and by the individual members of the profession.

I know all members have received many, many pieces of mail on this matter. I've received a mountain of mail, the vast majority of it from teachers who are opposed to the legislation. I would admit that there have been some letters that have been in favour, and I'm gratified by that. I would also point out that a number of the letters that I received in opposition appeared to be form letters. Over the 20 years or so that I've been in this place, I've never paid a lot of attention to form letters. I know, Speaker, that you would uphold the traditions of this assembly and would point out to me that petitions, for instance, go back a long way in our parliamentary tradition and that every citizen has the right, since Magna Carta, to petition the crown and so I should respect petitions. But I will tell you honestly, in general, I have even less respect for petitions than I have for form letters.

I'll tell you why. When I was teaching many years ago, I did an experiment with my students.

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): Was that before the Magna Carta?

Mr Wildman: No, it was just after the Magna Carta.

I did an experiment with my students. I had my students go out on the street corner one day with a petition and ask for signatures. They solicited signatures to the petition.

Mrs Marland: Anybody will sign anything.

Mr Wildman: Well, not quite. There were people who refused to sign, but a lot of people signed the petition. So we brought it back in and the next week we sent out the same students to the same corners with the opposite petition. What was really amazing was the number of signatures that were the same on both petitions.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): What does that tell you?

Mr Wildman: Well, it tells me that I should care very seriously about letters that are written by individual members of the public to me and to respond to them, and that I should look at petitions and form letters, but that I should not give them quite the same weight that I give

individual letters that are written by individual members of the public. At least, that's how I interpret it and that's how I've operated for many years.

I will point out, though, that I did receive a number of individual letters from teachers—which were not form letters—who complained about the fact that I was supporting the College of Teachers as proposed and who objected to the implementation of the legislation that we are now discussing. They raised a lot of the concerns that I've listed as I've talked about this legislation here today. I take those concerns very seriously, because an individual person took the time to sit down and compose a letter based on the concerns they had after looking at the situation and hearing the arguments on both sides. I hope those kinds of people, whether they be leaders of the federations or individual teachers, will be able to have a say before the committee to ensure that their concerns can be properly dealt with.

I support this legislation. I think it's been discussed back and forth for many years in this province, the possibility of having a self-governing profession of teachers. We now have had the experience and the suggestions of the royal commission, and all members of the House or at least all parties in the Legislature are prepared to act on that and to support it. This is a rather unique situation; we don't often get support from all three parties for a piece of legislation. So I think it's something we should be prepared to act upon and act as expeditiously as possible, ensuring that the possibility of amendment is there as we go through first the hearings before committee and then the clause-by-clause before the committee after second reading is passed.

I'm sure we'll be able to deal with these concerns, either demonstrate that they are not well-founded if they are not, or if they are indeed well-founded, be able to come up with wording that deals with them in a way that ensures that the teachers' interests are served individually, as well as the profession as a whole.

I want to congratulate the minister for moving forward in this regard, but I reiterate what I said at the outset: I find it most unfortunate that we're debating the establishment of a College of Teachers in this province at a time when we are destroying the jobs of many of the teachers across Ontario. Even more than that, I regret that this government is not prepared to keep its promise to protect classroom education for students across Ontario and has instead embarked on a policy which is designed to take as much money as possible as quickly as possible out of education in a way that will inevitably adversely affect classroom education; not just destroying junior kindergarten, not just changing adult education in a way that makes it more difficult for people who want to return to school and get the training and upgrading they need, but affecting every student in the province, every classroom in the province, and harming teachers and education in general in the process. I deeply regret that.

I wish the minister were as willing to listen to what members of the opposition are saying about the cuts he's determined to make as he apparently is with regard to the college and the recommendations of the royal commission in that regard. What about the other recommendations of the royal commission? What did the royal commission

say about early childhood education? What did the royal commission say about the role of teachers in education? While he's implementing the college, he's not acting on any of the other recommendations that the commission made that would have strengthened the role of teachers and protected education in the province.

That's most regrettable, and I call on the minister to review what he's doing with regard to education in Ontario to ensure that we do indeed protect classroom education rather than just continuing to hear the rhetoric he spouts while he cuts more and more from the education of our students.

1750

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Questions or comments?

Mr Murdoch: I'd like to comment on Bill 31 and try to stick with Bill 31. Unfortunately, sometimes members across the floor get swayed and get off on some other topics. But that's normal and that's acceptable in this House sometimes, so we'll let it go at this time.

I want to thank the other two parties for supporting the bill. As I mentioned before, though, I do have some concerns with Bill 31 and I hope that in the debate that follows, those concerns are looked after. In my riding, as I said before, a lot of the teachers have had concerns with this bill and that there hasn't been enough consultation yet. I hope that after we talk about it in the House here it goes to a standing committee and goes across the province so that all the teachers and the educators and people who are concerned have a chance to speak on this bill. As I said before, education's for our younger people and that's what we got to keep in mind, that this is something that will help our education system, to help educate the people we want to educate, not something that's the politically correct thing to do.

Mr Len Wood: You should listen to the teachers in your riding.

Mr Murdoch: The members across the floor say I should listen to the teachers from my riding. I hope I listen to everyone in my riding, whether they be teachers or not. I'm sure the speakers who have just spoken to this bill also do. The member who just spoke did mention that we have concerns and we want this bill to go through.

It is something to think about when all three parties have agreed. I've sat around here for a long time—maybe not as long as some over there—and we don't often get a bill that all three parties can agree to. Hopefully, this time when we come to the end, after a lot of discussion and after our teachers and other educators have had a chance for input, we come up with a conclusion that everyone can support in this House.

Mr Patten: I must share many of the views expressed today by the member for Algoma in identifying what many of the teachers are concerned about, but I must express my enthusiastic surprise and pleasure at hearing some members opposite talk about truly being prepared to listen very carefully to not only having hearings at committee but hearings that would tour the province to listen to teachers in different parts of Ontario. I think that's fabulous and I support that as well.

I hope the members for Grey-Owen Sound and Wellington really have the ear of the minister. I'm sure with

their views now, with what they have presented in other contexts and have perhaps received feedback on, this is a sign of some flexibility. As everyone has said, all three parties in concept and in principle support this, and indeed many teachers have supported this, and if the issues identified today have been faithfully identified—but you're never sure. Therefore, it's important to provide firsthand experience, for those to come forward and share their views, particularly teachers at this time. I would truly compliment the government if it did so, listened and made the necessary amendments to this legislation so that teachers felt very good and felt enthusiastic about being acknowledged as professionals, as they truly are.

Mr Bisson: I just want to commend my colleague for Algoma for the comments he made. I too am generally supportive of what this bill does. It is time we recognized that teachers are truly professionals in their own right, and as such we should allow them the same privileges that other professions, the nursing profession and others, have to deal with internal matters and regulate themselves. They're of that calibre, are able to do it, and we need to move forward and give them those powers.

I want to repeat what the member for Algoma said, issues that have been raised not only in my riding but in other ridings around the province. There are some concerns out there and I think some of them are legitimate. The powers the act will give the court to seize records and to search I think are already covered under other acts; the crown is able, if they're doing an investigation, to do that. I wonder why it's there. We need to have some good explanations in regard to those particular powers.

On the question of representation in regard to who will actually sit and control the College of Teachers, there is an argument that the representation needs to be modified somewhat. I would certainly hope that we listen to those concerns brought forward by the OSSTF and others—not only the OSSTF, but other teachers' associations—to make sure that we truly have a board that's representative of the teaching profession and not just of the management people within the teaching profession.

I want to repeat as well, though—the member for Algoma makes the point—that this is at the very time the government is cutting classroom funding by reducing junior kindergarten by half for those school boards that still have it, by reducing by half the funding for adult education for students over the age of 21 and others. It's quite regrettable the government is taking those actions in light of what it promised during the election.

Although I support this legislation, I also understand the government is looking for something positive to do in education to try to balance out some of the negative they do. None the less I will support the legislation but look forward to the committee work.

Mrs Marland: I'm very happy to comment on the member for Algoma's debate this afternoon on Bill 31. I too share the commendation and the pleasure of all three caucuses on this bill. To finally give one of the oldest

professions the professional recognition they deserve through their own self-regulating college, the same as other professions in this province, is long overdue.

All previous governments have discussed this, and I know for a fact that the dean of our House, the member for Nickel Belt, who has sat in this place since 1971 and also is a former teacher—I'm quite sure we could guarantee, if we have a recorded vote, that he will be on his feet in support of Bill 31. Isn't it wonderful that after all the debate about whether or not we should do this, and some criticisms on some sections of the bill, there is going to be a bill that all three caucuses in this Parliament will agree on and vote on in unison?

Some of the concern by some of the teachers frankly has been difficult for me to understand. I have met with my teachers and my federations and I think ultimately everyone will benefit from the establishment of this college and the passage of this bill.

The Speaker: The member for Algoma has up to two minutes for his wrapup.

Mr Wildman: I'd like to express thanks to my colleagues for their comments. Like the member for Ottawa Centre, I'm very gratified that Conservative members are talking about listening to teachers. My friend from Cochrane South talked about search and seizure. I think he was talking about the investigators and the powers that are proposed here, and that is one of the concerns, but again I would emphasize that we should look carefully at the Regulated Health Professions Act in looking at how those powers are dealt with.

Specifically, the member for Grey-Owen Sound said that he wanted the opportunity in the committee, which I believe will be sitting here in Toronto, for teachers to come forward and make their views known, and he hoped that the government would listen to the teachers. I find that commendable. I would hope that the government and the members of the committee will in fact listen to what the teachers have to say and attempt to respond in terms of amendments to this legislation.

I hope the government will follow the advice of the member for Grey-Owen Sound and listen to teachers in other specific issues as well. I hope the government would listen to the many teachers who are among the 100,000 people who marched in Hamilton outside of the government party's annual meeting, where they said they were there to represent the concerns of teachers about the cuts in education. I hope the member for Grey-Owen Sound will be a leading member, along with his friend from Wellington, in opposing the determination of this government to cut classroom education despite the promises they made as a party in the election campaign, and reverse their determination, apparently, to keep only one promise; that is, to cut taxes at a time when they are threatening education in the province.

The Speaker: It being almost 6 of the clock, the House stands adjourned until 1:30 of the clock tomorrow.
The House adjourned at 1800.

**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO**

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Lt Col The Hon / L'hon Henry N.R. Jackman CM, KStJ, BA, LLB, LLD

Speaker / Président: Hon / L'hon Allan K. McLean

Clerk / Greffier: Claude L. DesRosiers

Senior Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Journals / Greffier adjoint principal et Greffier des journaux: Alex D. McFedries

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees / Greffière adjointe et Greffière des comités: Deborah Deller

Sergeant at Arms / Sergent d'armes: Thomas Stelling

| Member / Député(e) | Constituency / Circonscription | Party / Parti | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|---|--------------------------------|---------------|--|
| Agostino, Dominic | Hamilton East / -Est | L | |
| Arnott, Ted | Wellington | PC | |
| Baird, John R. | Nepean | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Labour / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre du Travail |
| Barrett, Toby | Norfolk | PC | |
| Bartolucci, Rick | Sudbury | L | |
| Bassett, Isabel | St Andrew-St Patrick | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, deputy government House leader / adjointe parlementaire du ministre des Finances, chef parlementaire adjointe du gouvernement |
| Beaubien, Marcel | Lambton | PC | parliamentary assistant (rural affairs) to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / adjoint parlementaire (secteur Affaires rurales) du ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales |
| Bisson, Gilles | Cochrane South / -Sud | ND | |
| Boushy, Dave | Sarnia | PC | |
| Boyd, Marion | London Centre / -Centre | ND | |
| Bradley, James J. | St Catharines | L | deputy opposition leader, opposition House leader / chef adjoint de l'opposition, chef parlementaire de l'opposition |
| Brown, Jim | Scarborough West / -Ouest | PC | |
| Brown, Michael A. | Algoma-Manitoulin | L | deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition |
| Caplan, Elinor | Oriole | L | chief opposition whip / whip en chef de l'opposition |
| Carr, Gary | Oakville South / -Sud | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / adjoint parlementaire du solliciteur général et du ministre des Services correctionnels |
| Carroll, Jack | Chatham-Kent | PC | |
| Castrilli, Annamarie | Downsview | L | |
| Chiarelli, Robert | Ottawa West / -Ouest | L | |
| Christopherson, David | Hamilton Centre / -Centre | ND | deputy New Democratic Party whip / whip adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique |
| Chudleigh, Ted | Halton North / -Nord | PC | |
| Churley, Marilyn | Riverdale | ND | Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième Vice-Présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Cleary, John C. | Cornwall | L | |
| Clement, Tony | Brampton South / -Sud | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / adjoint parlementaire de la ministre des Affaires civiles, de la Culture et des Loisirs |
| Colle, Mike | Oakwood | L | |
| Conway, Sean G. | Renfrew North / -Nord | L | |
| Cooke, David S. | Windsor-Riverside | ND | New Democratic Party House leader / chef parlementaire du Nouveau Parti démocratique |
| Cordiano, Joseph | Lawrence | L | |
| Crozier, Bruce | Essex South / -Sud | L | deputy opposition whip / whip adjoint de l'opposition |
| Cunningham, Hon / L'hon Dianne | London North / -Nord | PC | Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, minister responsible for women's issues / ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales, ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine |
| Curling, Alvin | Scarborough North / -Nord | L | |

| Member / Député(e) | Constituency / Circonscription | Party / Parti | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|---|--|---------------|--|
| Danford, Harry | Hastings-Peterborough | PC | parliamentary assistant (agriculture and food) to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / adjoint parlementaire (secteurs Agriculture et Alimentation) du ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales |
| DeFaria, Carl | Mississauga East / -Est | PC | |
| Doyle, Ed | Wentworth East / -Est | PC | assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement |
| Duncan, Dwight | Windsor-Walkerville | L | |
| Ecker, Janet | Durham West / -Ouest | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Community and Social Services / adjointe parlementaire du ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires |
| Elliott, Hon / L'hon Brenda | Guelph | PC | Minister of Environment and Energy / ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Énergie |
| Eves, Hon / L'hon Ernie L. | Parry Sound | PC | Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance, government House leader / vice-premier ministre, ministre des Finances, leader parlementaire du gouvernement |
| Fisher, Barbara | Bruce | PC | |
| Flaherty, Jim | Durham Centre / -Centre | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / adjoint parlementaire du ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce |
| Ford, Douglas B. | Etobicoke-Humber | PC | |
| Fox, Gary | Prince Edward-Lennox-South Hastings / Prince Edward-Lennox-Hastings-Sud | PC | |
| Froese, Tom | St Catharines-Brock | PC | |
| Galt, Doug | Northumberland | PC | parliamentary assistant (environment) to the Minister of Environment and Energy / adjoint parlementaire (secteur Environnement) de la ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Énergie |
| Gerretsen, John | Kingston and The Islands / Kingston et Les Îles | L | |
| Gilchrist, Steve | Scarborough East / -Est | PC | |
| Grandmaître, Bernard | Ottawa East / -Est | L | |
| Gravelle, Michael | Port Arthur | L | |
| Grimmett, Bill | Muskoka-Georgian Bay / Muskoka-Baie-Georgienne | PC | parliamentary assistant (tourism) to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / adjoint parlementaire (secteur Tourisme) du ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme |
| Guzzo, Garry J. | Ottawa-Rideau | PC | parliamentary assistant (energy) to the Minister of Environment and Energy / adjoint parlementaire (secteur Énergie) de la ministre de l'Environnement et de l'Énergie |
| Hampton, Howard | Rainy River | ND | |
| Hardeman, Ernie | Oxford | PC | parliamentary assistant (municipal affairs – rural) to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / adjoint parlementaire (Affaires municipales – secteur rural) du ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement |
| Harnick, Hon / L'hon Charles | Willowdale | PC | Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs / procureur général, ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones |
| Harris, Hon / L'hon Michael D. | Nipissing | PC | Premier and President of the Executive Council / premier ministre et président du Conseil exécutif |
| Hastings, John | Etobicoke-Rexdale | PC | |
| Hodgson, Hon / L'hon Chris | Victoria-Haliburton | PC | Minister of Natural Resources, Minister of Northern Development and Mines / ministre des Richesses naturelles, ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines |
| Hoy, Pat | Essex-Kent | L | |
| Hudak, Tim | Niagara South / -Sud | PC | |
| Jackson, Hon / L'hon Cameron | Burlington South / -Sud | PC | Minister without Portfolio (Workers' Compensation Board) / ministre sans portefeuille (Commission des accidents du travail) |
| Johns, Helen | Huron | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Health / adjointe parlementaire du ministre de la Santé |

| Member / Député(e) | Constituency / Circonscription | Party / Parti | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|---------------------------------------|--|---------------|---|
| Johnson, Bert | Perth | PC | Deputy Speaker and Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Vice-Président de la Chambre et Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Johnson, Hon / L'hon David | Don Mills | PC | Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / président du Conseil de gestion |
| Johnson, Ron | Brantford | PC | |
| Jordan, Leo | Lanark-Renfrew | PC | deputy government whip / whip adjoint du gouvernement |
| Kells, Morley | Etobicoke-Lakeshore | PC | |
| Klees, Frank | York-Mackenzie | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Natural Resources / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Richesses naturelles |
| Kormos, Peter | Welland-Thorold | ND | |
| Kwinter, Monte | Wilson Heights | L | |
| Lalonde, Jean-Marc | Prescott and Russell / Prescott et Russell | L | |
| Lankin, Frances | Beaches-Woodbine | ND | chief New Democratic Party whip / whip en chef du Nouveau Parti démocratique |
| Laughren, Floyd | Nickel Belt | ND | deputy New Democratic Party leader / chef adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique |
| Leach, Hon / L'hon Al | St George-St David | PC | Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement |
| Leadston, Gary L. | Kitchener-Wilmot | PC | |
| Marchese, Rosario | Fort York | ND | |
| Marland, Margaret | Mississauga South / -Sud | PC | |
| Martel, Shelley | Sudbury East / -Est | ND | |
| Martin, Tony | Sault Ste Marie | ND | |
| Martiniuk, Gerry | Cambridge | PC | |
| Maves, Bart | Niagara Falls | PC | |
| McGuinty, Dalton | Ottawa South / -Sud | L | |
| McLean, Hon / L'hon Allan K. | Simcoe East / -Est | PC | Speaker / Président |
| McLeod, Lyn | Fort William | L | Leader of the Opposition / chef de l'opposition |
| Miclash, Frank | Kenora | L | deputy opposition House leader / chef parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition |
| Morin, Gilles E. | Carleton East / -Est | L | First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier Vice-Président du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative |
| Munro, Julia | Durham-York | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Premier / adjointe parlementaire du premier ministre |
| Murdoch, Bill | Grey-Owen Sound | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Northern Development and Mines / adjoint parlementaire du ministre du Développement du Nord et des Mines |
| Mushinski, Hon / L'hon Marilyn | Scarborough-Ellesmere | PC | Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation / ministre des Affaires civiques, de la Culture et des Loisirs |
| Newman, Dan | Scarborough Centre / -Centre | PC | parliamentary assistant to the minister responsible for native affairs / adjoint parlementaire du ministre délégué aux Affaires autochtones |
| North, Peter | Elgin | Ind | |
| O'Toole, John R. | Durham East / -Est | PC | |
| Ouellette, Jerry J. | Oshawa | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Transportation / adjoint parlementaire du ministre des Transports |
| Palladini, Hon / L'hon Al | York Centre / -Centre | PC | Minister of Transportation / ministre des Transports |
| Parker, John L. | York East / -Est | PC | |
| Patten, Richard | Ottawa Centre / -Centre | L | |
| Pettit, Trevor | Hamilton Mountain | PC | |
| Phillips, Gerry | Scarborough-Agincourt | L | |
| Pouliot, Gilles | Lake Nipigon / Lac-Nipigon | ND | |
| Preston, Peter L. | Brant-Haldimand | PC | |
| Pupatello, Sandra | Windsor-Sandwich | L | |
| Ramsay, David | Timiskaming | L | |

| Member / Député(e) | Constituency / Circonscription | Party / Parti | Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités |
|--|--|---------------|--|
| Rollins, E.J. Douglas | Quinte | PC | |
| Ross, Lillian | Hamilton West / -Ouest | PC | assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement |
| Runciman, Hon / L'hon Robert W. | Leeds-Grenville | PC | Solicitor General and Minister of Correctional Services / solliciteur général et ministre des Services correctionnels |
| Ruprecht, Tony | Parkdale | L | |
| Sampson, Rob | Mississauga West / -Ouest | PC | parliamentary assistant (financial institutions) to the Minister of Finance / adjoint parlementaire (institutions financières) du ministre des Finances |
| Saunderson, Hon / L'hon William | Eglinton | PC | Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme |
| Sergio, Mario | Yorkview | L | |
| Shea, Derwyn | High Park-Swansea | PC | parliamentary assistant (municipal affairs – urban) to the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / adjoint parlementaire (Affaires municipales – secteur urbain) du ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement |
| Sheehan, Frank | Lincoln | PC | |
| Silipo, Tony | Dovercourt | ND | deputy New Democratic Party House leader / chef parlementaire adjoint du Nouveau Parti démocratique |
| Skarica, Toni | Wentworth North / -Nord | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Education and Training / adjoint parlementaire du ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation |
| Smith, Bruce | Middlesex | PC | |
| Snobelen, Hon / L'hon John | Mississauga North / -Nord | PC | Minister of Education and Training / ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation |
| Spina, Joseph | Brampton North / -Nord | PC | parliamentary assistant (small business) to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism / adjoint parlementaire (secteur petites entreprises) du ministre du Développement économique, du Commerce et du Tourisme |
| Sterling, Hon / L'hon Norman W. | Carleton | PC | Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations / ministre de la Consommation et du Commerce |
| Stewart, R. Gary | Peterborough | PC | |
| Stockwell, Chris | Etobicoke West / -Ouest | PC | |
| Tascona, Joseph N. | Simcoe Centre / -Centre | PC | |
| Tilson, David | Dufferin-Peel | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Attorney General / adjoint parlementaire du procureur général |
| Tsubouchi, Hon / L'hon David H. | Markham | PC | Minister of Community and Social Services / ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires |
| Turnbull, David | York Mills | PC | chief government whip / whip en chef du gouvernement |
| Vankoughnet, Bill | Frontenac-Addington | PC | |
| Villeneuve, Hon / L'hon Noble | S-D-G & East Grenville / S-D-G et Grenville-Est | PC | Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs / ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales, ministre délégué aux Affaires francophones |
| Wettlaufer, Wayne | Kitchener | PC | assistant deputy government whip / whip adjoint suppléant du gouvernement |
| Wildman, Bud | Algoma | ND | interim leader of the New Democratic Party / chef par intérim du Nouveau Parti démocratique |
| Wilson, Hon / L'hon Jim | Simcoe West / -Ouest | PC | Minister of Health / ministre de la Santé |
| Witmer, Hon / L'hon Elizabeth | Waterloo North / -Nord | PC | Minister of Labour / ministre du Travail |
| Wood, Bob | London South / -Sud | PC | parliamentary assistant to the Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / adjoint parlementaire du président du Conseil de gestion |
| Wood, Len | Cochrane North / -Nord | ND | |
| Young, Terence H. | Halton Centre / -Centre | PC | parliamentary assistant (colleges and universities) to the Minister of Education and Training / adjoint parlementaire (secteur collèges et universités) du ministre de l'Éducation et de la Formation |
| Vacant | York South / -Sud | | |

**STANDING COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Administration of justice / Administration de la justice

Chair / Président: Gerry Martiniuk
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Ron Johnson
Marion Boyd, Robert Chiarelli, Sean G. Conway,
Ed Doyle, Garry J. Guzzo, Howard Hampton,
Tim Hudak, Ron Johnson, Frank Klees,
Gary L. Leadston, Gerry Martiniuk, John L. Parker,
David Ramsay, David Tilson
Clerk / Greffière: Donna Bryce

Estimates / Budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Alvin Curling
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Joseph Cordiano
Toby Barrett, Gilles Bisson, Jim Brown,
Michael A. Brown, John C. Cleary, Tony Clement,
Joseph Cordiano, Alvin Curling, Morley Kells,
Tony Martin, E.J. Douglas Rollins, Lillian Ross,
Frank Sheehan, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffière: Tannis Manikel

**Finance and economic affairs /
Finances et affaires économiques**

Chair / Président: Ted Chudleigh
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Tim Hudak
Ted Arnott, Jim Brown, Annamarie Castrilli,
Ted Chudleigh, Douglas B. Ford, Tim Hudak,
Frances Lankin, Monte Kwinter, Gerry Martiniuk,
Gerry Phillips, Rob Sampson, Tony Silipo,
Joseph Spina, Wayne Wettlaufer
Clerk / Greffier: Franco Carrozza

General government / Affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: Jack Carroll
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Bart Maves
Jack Carroll, Harry Danford, Jim Flaherty,
Bernard Grandmaître, Ernie Hardeman, Morley Kells,
Rosario Marchese, Bart Maves, Sandra Pupatello,
Mario Sergio, R. Gary Stewart, Joseph N. Tascona,
Len Wood, Terence H. Young
Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

Government agencies / Organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: Floyd Laughren
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Tony Martin
Rick Bartolucci, Bruce Crozier, Douglas B. Ford,
Gary Fox, Michael Gravelle, Bert Johnson, Peter Kormos,
Floyd Laughren, Gary L. Leadston, Tony Martin,
Dan Newman, Peter L. Preston, Lillian Ross, Bob Wood
Clerk / Greffière: Tannis Manikel

Legislative Assembly / Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Ted Arnott
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: John Hastings
Ted Arnott, Rick Bartolucci, Dave Boushy, David S. Cooke,
Carl DeFaria, Tom Froese, Bill Grimmett, John Hastings,
Ron Johnson, Frank Miclash, Gilles E. Morin,
John R. O'Toole, Tony Silipo, R. Gary Stewart
Clerk / Greffière: Lisa Freedman

Ombudsman

Chair / Président: John L. Parker
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Tom Froese
Elinor Caplan, Carl DeFaria, Ed Doyle, Barbara Fisher,
Tom Froese, Doug Galt, Pat Hoy, Leo Jordan,
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Rosario Marchese, John L. Parker,
Chris Stockwell, Bill Vankoughnet, Len Wood
Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker

Public accounts / Comptes publics

Chair / Président: Dalton McGuinty
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Mike Colle
Dominic Agostino, Marcel Beaubien, Dave Boushy,
Gary Carr, Mike Colle, Bruce Crozier, Gary Fox,
Steve Gilchrist, John Hastings, Shelley Martel,
Dalton McGuinty, Gilles Pouliot, Toni Skarica,
Bill Vankoughnet
Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker

**Regulations and private bills /
Règlements et projets de loi privés**

Chair / Président: Toby Barrett
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Bruce Smith
Toby Barrett, Gilles Bisson, Dave Boushy, John Hastings,
John R. O'Toole, Trevor Pettit, Gilles Pouliot,
Sandra Pupatello, E.J. Douglas Rollins, Tony Ruprecht,
Mario Sergio, Derwyn Shea, Frank Sheehan, Bruce Smith
Clerk / Greffière: Lisa Freedman

**Resources development /
Développement des ressources**

Chair / Président: Steve Gilchrist
Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente: Barbara Fisher
John R. Baird, Jack Carroll, David Christopherson,
Ted Chudleigh, Marilyn Churley, Dwight Duncan,
Barbara Fisher, Steve Gilchrist, Pat Hoy,
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Bart Maves, Bill Murdoch,
Jerry J. Ouellette, Joseph N. Tascona
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

Social development / Affaires sociales

Chair / Président: Richard Patten
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: John Gerretsen
Dominic Agostino, Janet Ecker, John Gerretsen,
Michael Gravelle, Helen Johns, Leo Jordan,
Floyd Laughren, Julia Munro, Dan Newman,
Richard Patten, Trevor Pettit, Peter L. Preston,
Bruce Smith, Bud Wildman
Clerk / Greffière: Lynn Mellor

These lists appear in the first and last issues of each session and on the first Monday of each month. A list arranged by riding appears when space permits.

Ces listes figurent dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et du premier lundi de chaque mois. Par contre, une liste des circonscriptions paraît si l'espace est disponible.

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Publications



No. 51

N° 51

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 2 April 1996

Mardi 2 avril 1996



Speaker
Honourable Allan K. McLean

Président
L'honorable Allan K. McLean

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 2 April 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 2 avril 1996

*The House met at 1332.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

HEPATITIS A

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Orillia): I rise today to address a serious and preventable health concern. Hepatitis A is a viral infection which generally causes nausea, jaundice, fever, diarrhoea, fatigue, abdominal pain and liver failure, even death. Every year hundreds of Ontarians are infected by hepatitis A, receiving the virus from infected individuals who do not wash their hands after a bowel movement.

I'd like to urge this government to develop a strategy to deal with this potentially deadly disease. There are different approaches that will prove effective to deal with the problem. Unfortunately, people often get the virus from foodservice workers. The government could work together with the hospitality industry to create a new public awareness campaign to remind people of the importance of personal hygiene, particularly hand washing. Another option would be to require hepatitis A vaccinations for foodservice workers. The vaccine does exist and is a cost-effective way to deal with this problem in a preventive way.

Hepatitis A is a very serious issue. People have died from this disease. It is preventable. Cost-effective options do exist to deal with this potentially serious problem. It does not have to cost the government anything—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member's time has expired.

BIRCHWOOD TERRACE

Mr Gilles Pouliot (Lake Nipigon): The residents of Terrace Bay in my riding of Lake Nipigon are indeed very concerned about the future of Birchwood Terrace. Birchwood Terrace is the only long-term-care community in the township of Terrace Bay.

Today there are 417 senior citizens on waiting lists for homes for the aged in the district because of the Minister of Health; he will only allow 23 of Birchwood's 62 units to be occupied. Therefore, many of these residents, these seniors are forced to stay in local hospitals at a much greater cost. Our seniors and their children are being burdened simply because the minister will not snap out of it, and deliberately and systematically prefers the bottom line, the power of the purse, the power of a buck, and destroys vis-à-vis our seniors. We're hoping to be able to take care of our seniors in their own community.

FOUR COUNTIES GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr Bruce Smith (Middlesex): Yesterday was a very important day for Four Counties General Hospital in Middlesex. As of yesterday, the emergency department at Four Counties is reopening and will offer 24-hour emergency care services.

As all members know, hospitals in small and rural communities have had great difficulty ensuring full coverage by physicians in their emergency departments over the last few years. At Four Counties General emergency care has been underserved since May 1994, over two years. As a result, many small hospitals have had to dip into their operating budgets to top up pay for physicians, while others have had to limit hours of operation.

On December 4, 1995, as promised, our government acted in response to the concerns of rural residents by announcing the implementation of a small/rural hospital emergency coverage fee for physicians. On behalf of the many residents of Middlesex county and others within the Four Counties service area, I extend my thanks to Health Minister Wilson for his decisive action on physician coverage of small and rural hospital emergency departments, as recommended by the Graham Scott report.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): Yesterday in the House the Minister of Economic Development and Trade sent a message to students in this province that sent chills throughout our colleges and universities. Students in my riding disagree with the minister and this government's disregard for the economic realities facing students. In a letter I received this morning, the president of Lakehead University Student Union, Adele Ritchie, spoke on behalf of her colleagues. I would like to read parts of Ms Ritchie's letter in the hope that the minister responsible for youth employment will listen to what students are really saying.

"This summer is a crucial one for students in Ontario. Not only are they facing an increased tuition hike in September of up to 20%, but they are no more ensured of a job than they have been in the last two years. I do not see the sense in freezing the minimum wage level as a means for creating jobs. That does not guarantee in any way that more young people will be hired. This does not guarantee that they will be able to afford the added tuition costs come September....

"Students in the northern regions of Ontario are particularly hard hit by the lack of jobs and are being forced to leave to try to find employment in the larger cities in order to support themselves....

"Ontario is not open for business, certainly not for the little people. For those who think that a student's education can be partially subsidized by parents, they are sadly mistaken for we are not the only ones not able to find work."

Ms Ritchie urges the government "to recognize that education is common sense and to encourage small businesses and large corporations to give students a chance."

The government must stop cutting the education sector at all levels and give students a chance to live their lives.

1340

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): The statement I'm going to make is directed at the Minister of Community and Social Services. I hope he'll listen to the dilemma one of my constituents finds herself in. This constituent has been on family benefits since 1987, since 1992 on the disability portion of family benefits. In 1995, in July, because she agrees that people should attempt to be self-sufficient, she decided to try working again, but unfortunately her condition only enabled her to work for about two and a half months. As a result of working over 30 days, that constituent then had to apply for GWA, and she is waiting to be fast-tracked on to FBA.

This woman has a 15-year-old daughter and a 16-year-old son. The 16-year-old son has been found by her doctor to be severely malnourished and in need of food supplements. My constituent has accessed all the available resources—the food bank, the Salvation Army, the men's mission, Neighbour Link, LIFE*SPIN, all of those helping community agencies—and still she is unable to provide adequately the kind of food that her child needs while she is waiting to get back on to the family allowance.

I urge the minister, when cases like this come forward, to encourage those of us who are members of the Legislature to bring those cases forward for special consideration. The long-term costs are extremely serious, and I urge the minister to pay attention to these issues.

DURHAM BOARD OF EDUCATION

Mr Jim Flaherty (Durham Centre): I rise today to bring to the attention of the members of this House the tremendous work being done by the Durham Board of Education. The Durham Board of Education has been chosen as the North American nominee for an award given by Carl Bertelsmann Verlag, a major publisher of education and government texts in Germany. The board was nominated by a North American selection committee as a school system which represents the best framework for the development of schools.

Durham is the North American nominee and one of only seven public school authorities in the world vying for the prize, which is a grant of \$312,000. Other nominees come from Hungary, the Netherlands, Norway, Scotland, New Zealand and Switzerland. Durham board officials will attend the awards ceremony at no expense to taxpayers.

I have written the interim director of the board to offer my congratulations. I am sure the other members of the

House will join me in applauding the fine job being done by the Durham Board of Education and this international recognition of the board's excellence.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): I want to read a letter that we received yesterday following statements by the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism on youth employment from Joel Lynn, president-elect of Wilfrid Laurier University Students Union.

He was so shocked by how out of touch the minister was on the issue that he wrote:

"I find it difficult for the government of Ontario to make 'general comments' on the employment, particularly youth employment, when this same government has just recently increased the cost of education.

"The students of Wilfrid Laurier University are faced with a 16% increase in tuition fees and an even greater increase in student service fees. The need for summer employment will be greater than ever. As public support programs such as OSAP continue to diminish, students are relying more on summer employment to support the costs of their education.

"Mr Saunderson's commentary and evaluation of the current situation is disappointing and disheartening to students. In one of his closing statements, he discusses his government 'freezing hydro rates, changing labour legislation...' rather than directly addressing the issue at hand. I would recommend to Mr Saunderson to outline specifically what his government's plans are for summer employment. Students of Wilfrid Laurier are about to embark on their summer plans to raise money for next year's education expenses. The cost of a full-time undergraduate program has surpassed the \$10,000 per year mark, factoring in all cost-of-living expenses. Producing this"—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member's time has expired.

LAURENTIAN HOSPITAL LABORATORY

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I wish to bring to the attention of the House an issue that is related to the government's overwhelming desire for privatization at any cost.

I refer to a proposal to the Ministry of Health that hospital laboratory services be privatized and tests performed by a lab jointly owned by MDS Laboratories and Sudbury General Hospital. This private enterprise will be making a profit from the funds the Ministry of Health pays to the lab to perform tests. This private lab will be making a profit from our tax dollars. This is not acceptable.

If this government feels there is a need to expand laboratory services in Sudbury, then the most logical place to expand would be the existing labs at Laurentian Hospital. This hospital lab was originally built to service a regional laboratory. It can be expanded with very little capital costs. The Laurentian Hospital lab is located in the same building as the Northeastern Ontario Regional Cancer Treatment Centre. This allows for the highly specialized testing needed for proper diagnoses. An

expanded lab at Laurentian Hospital will provide tests cheaper than the proposed MDS-Sudbury General laboratory, as much as 75% cheaper.

If this government is so concerned about the bottom line, then it should seriously examine why it wants to spend more money than is necessary to change the hospital lab system in Sudbury. The proposal makes no sense whatsoever and would cause good pathologists and lab technicians to leave Sudbury.

RED HILL CREEK EXPRESSWAY

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): Mr Speaker, this afternoon I wish to inform you about how the Harris government is following through on its commitment to build a very important piece of infrastructure in the Hamilton-Wentworth area—the Red Hill Creek Expressway.

The Harris government has committed \$20 million a year over the next five years for the completion of the expressway. This is in addition to the \$6.75 million we deferred in July and the approximately \$45 million that the region expects to make from development fees. The total amount the province will be contributing is well over half of the \$200 million it will cost to finish the expressway. This money is in addition to the \$80 million that the province has already contributed.

It is also important to note that this commitment comes at a time when no other municipal roads are being funded directly by the province. In fact, many municipalities have seen significant reductions in their funding.

The Minister of Transportation, Al Palladini, met with Hamilton-Wentworth regional chair Terry Cooke last week and asked that the region immediately call for tenders so that the expressway can be built as soon as possible. The province is paying for half of this tender process as well.

Hamilton-Wentworth may wish to pursue new delivery techniques that saved up to 22% on the cost of Highway 407. Minister Palladini has made it clear that any savings Hamilton-Wentworth can realize through such an approach would reduce its share of the cost, not the province's. This is going to happen despite the public pronouncements of the member for Hamilton East not to build the expressway at all.

ORAL QUESTIONS

SERVICES FOR THE DISABLED

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): My first question is for the Premier. Premier, the people of Ontario continue to be more than a little dismayed by the attitude of you and of your cabinet to people who are less fortunate in life.

Just minutes from here, at St Paul's church at the corner of Bloor and Jarvis, the number of homeless people who take refuge there has doubled over this past winter. Over at Bloor and Bathurst at St Peter's church, they served 15% more people in their program for the homeless this winter. At St Andrew's church across from

Roy Thomson Hall, the number of people who came in from the cold was up by 9% this winter.

Yesterday, you said on the radio that you think many people choose to be homeless. I wonder if you can tell me why so many more people chose to be homeless this winter than last winter.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): Let me clearly acknowledge that one person homeless is a tragedy in the province of Ontario and something this government is concerned about and wants to address. What I had indicated when asked on the radio show was that those who are involved in the field, running the centres, running the shelters, had indicated a frustration that there were a few people who choose, in spite of the fact that programs are there, to be there.

I was repeating what the experts in the field are telling us, that in spite of the programs, in spite of welfare, in spite of the housing programs, in spite of the efforts and the shelters, there are some people who choose that. This is regrettable and unfortunate, and I share their concern and frustration.

Clearly, it's been a very difficult winter for a number of people and this is something that I think we all want to work hard to address. The sooner, I can tell you, we can turn the economy around and get more jobs, get more prosperity, more hope, which is what our agenda is all about, as to the failed agenda of the last 10 years, I think the more opportunity there will be for everybody.

Mrs McLeod: Let me suggest to you, Premier, that the three people who died on the streets this winter were not making a lifestyle choice.

When you refer to people in the field and what you've heard from them, let me tell you what people in the field are saying, in this case, Sheryl Lindsay from the Hostel Outreach Program:

"Many of the people that we deal with have lost their housing as a result of their cheques being reduced. They are not there by choice. They're there because they have so few supports in the community. Many have been discharged from psychiatric institutions without appropriate plans for their accommodations. Many have lost their income supports and cannot afford housing. They are not homeless by choice; they have no other options."

1350

Premier, I suggest to you that the kind of ignorance that underlies the statement you made yesterday and that you reinforced with your statements today is an attitude that seems to permeate your government, and it's an attitude that says the disabled, the poor and the most vulnerable in our society just don't deserve your help.

We were shocked to realize that your government was even planning to cut winter clothes and back-to-school clothes allowances for poor children until somebody leaked that possibility, so I understand you've now retreated from your plan to cut winter clothing and back-to-school allowances, and I'm glad you've decided that even poor children deserve a warm winter jacket and shoes that fit.

Despite your promise, we understand that you're looking still at a 10% cut to programs for mentally and physically disabled children and adults. Which is it, Premier? Are the disabled going to see their programs

cut, or are you going to keep your promise not to cut aid to the disabled?

Hon Mr Harris: Let me again repeat that I agree with Sheryl that many of the people they're dealing with, in fact most, are not there by choice, and it is very difficult. But over the years, the experts tell me that there were a number of people, when my government was in power in the 1960s and the 1970s, and the Liberals in the 1980s and the NDP in the early 1990s—that there are some people, and the frustration that is—in spite of the fact that the shelters are there, the help is there, for whatever reason, they are making a choice to live on the street. Perhaps more assistance in counselling and help and assistance can be there. But certainly, every individual is a concern of ours.

With regard to your silly allegations which you make, it ranks up there with saying you're going to cut health care; and we have not. You said we would reduce the funding for the number of child care spaces. We have 12,500 more permanent spaces than the Liberals and the NDP had. So a lot of your allegations are so silly that they're nonsense, and the recent ones you've made rank in that category.

Mrs McLeod: Premier, I repeat to you, people are not suffering this winter because of some choice they are making to live on the streets. People are suffering because of the policies you have put in place. People are suffering because you have chosen to pay for your tax cut on the backs of the poorest and the most vulnerable people in this society, and that, Premier, is unconscionable.

The depth of your cuts are about one thing and one thing only, and you cannot put a better face on it. It is about financing a tax cut for the wealthiest people in this province. Premier, in order to do that you've even been prepared to consider cutting clothing allowances for the poorest children in the province to pay for a tax cut. You still have not retracted the cuts that you made to the parents who are on welfare and who are caring for disabled children.

As I understand your non-answer to my question, you won't rule out cutting benefits for disabled children and adults even though that was a promise you made to the disabled of this province. All I can ask you, Premier, is, why do you continue to trample shamelessly on the weakest members of our society for the sake of delivering your tax bonanza to the wealthiest members of our society?

Hon Mr Harris: I guess the premise of the question is what is so silly. I could take your comments in Hansard tomorrow—you said, "People are not suffering this winter," stop there, and say that's what the Leader of the Opposition said, it's in the Hansard, and it will be there tomorrow.

So if you're determined to try and fearmonger and misrepresent the policies and scare people, then I guess I can't stop you from doing that. All I can do is to reassure you that we are trying to put our limited resources first and foremost at the most vulnerable, the needy, the elderly, the disabled and children. That is the whole focus of our campaign.

I say to the member, if she thinks that throwing more money at it works, let me quote you something, "Hostel

use increased every year under the NDP government between 1990 and 1994 in spite of the fact welfare rates were raised each and every year." So obviously, it isn't the amount of money that's causing the problem; it is the whole system that is broken, and you have a government here prepared to have the courage to change the system to truly give people some hope in the future. That's what we're doing and we'll all be better for it, particularly the needy.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. The Liberal Party has been trying to force this government to address the issue of youth unemployment for several months now and we've had a great deal of difficulty. We hope that after today we may get the message through that we believe it is an issue and it must be addressed.

Yesterday, in response to a question from our Leader of the Opposition on youth employment, Minister Saunderson implied that the government has been working on providing employment opportunities for youth by stating that 31,000 new jobs were created in the month of February. It was neglected to mention, though, that 7,000 jobs were also lost in that same month. He simply tried to imply that some of these new jobs were actually created for youth.

I wasn't the only person in Ontario who was shocked by his complete lack of understanding of the significance of the issue of youth unemployment. I've received comments in my office from students across the province who wrote to me after Minister Saunderson's comments in the Legislature to express their views. Michael Burns, executive director of the Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance, wrote: "Youth today are acutely aware of the province's financial difficulties.... But we also know that job opportunities are essential to our future, both as individuals and as a society. If youth in Ontario receive fewer opportunities; if we are squeezed out of the system by cuts to programs; we will be cheated out of something nothing else can ever replace."

I ask the minister, what is he prepared to do to help these students who are desperate to find jobs to fund their education?

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): I'm very happy to respond to the question from the member for Windsor-Sandwich. As I indicated in my answer yesterday, and I believe last week as well, we will be making an announcement very shortly about youth summer employment. I am sure that when the honourable member receives this message and announcement, she will be pleased. I would ask her to be patient; it's coming very shortly.

Mrs Pupatello: Mr Speaker, I have to tell you I'm somewhat surprised because he didn't indicate that there would be an announcement coming—in fact, rumours have abounded that there would be cuts, and it's these cuts that are making the students afraid. The issue of youth employment is not just a student issue; it deals with youth and their opportunity to enter first jobs. So the

issue is not just going to be addressed by some grand statement that you might throw together. I have to tell you that he must realize it's a youth employment crisis.

He has underestimated the unemployment rate. No one, other than the minister, believes the unemployment rate to be at 16%. It's the figures from the Ministry of Finance that we're looking at, the same as the minister has. They show a drop of 150,000 in the participation rate, and they must be counted in. In fact, the Scotiabank Global Economic Outlook counts in those that have been dropped out. It says: "The severity of Canada's labour market problems is highlighted by the sharp drop in labour force participation...the plunge in labour force participation has been concentrated among young Canadians between 15 to 24 years of age. Putting the participation rate" back in "would push their jobless rates above 25%!" They can't deny that there is indeed a crisis.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Put your question.

Mrs Pupatello: If there is indeed something to report, something to tell us that this government is going to do about it, I'd like the minister on his feet today to announce exactly what his intentions are, because there are people who are waiting for some leadership from the government.

The Speaker: The question has been asked.

Hon Mr Sanderson: The member for Windsor-Sandwich asked me to be on my feet and make a statement, and I will make a statement to you. We are making the climate right in this province to create many, many new jobs. It's not only going to be permanent jobs, but it will be summer jobs as well for the students you were talking about. I see you roll your eyes. It's very hard for you to listen to this.

What we are doing in this province is getting the message out that we are attracting companies not only to come to Ontario from the United States but from all around the world. I've had the pleasure of meeting with companies in Europe and the United States and telling them what we are doing to make the climate right and to get the message out that we're open for business.

I'm happy to report that only three weeks ago a new company opened in Burlington, within the six months since we've been elected, and they came because of what we are doing in this province. We've opened their eyes to what you can do in this province.

We said we would create 725,000 new jobs; we are well on the way to doing that. I would suggest that you consider what we are doing and you will be satisfied that these jobs will be created in the long run.

1400

Mrs Pupatello: I have to tell you that students across Ontario are listening avidly today to the kinds of responses we're getting in the House.

Heather Bishop, chairperson of the Canadian Federation of Students—Ontario: "Mike Harris promised a hand up, not a handout, when he got elected. So far, all he has offered students is a slap in the face."

Adele Ritchie from Lakehead University: "Ontario is not open for business, not for little people. For those who think a student's education can be partially subsidized by

parents, they are sadly mistaken, because they're not the only ones not able to find work."

From Carleton University in Ottawa: "As costs are rising, more and more students are finding it necessary to work full-time and go to school part-time. They're looking for help from Carleton."

A third-year student at Wilfrid Laurier University: "I realize we must all take our lumps and grin and bear it. However, if we increase the already dangerously high youth unemployment in Ontario, do we not destroy the very heart of our future real-world society?"

The people from Queen's University in Kingston: "Students must have opportunities to finance their education directly. While government is increasing student costs, opportunities are not being created for students to finance these increases."

The Speaker: Would you put your question.

Mrs Pupatello: The people from Guelph too have something to say.

My question: Clearly, we have an indication that students from across Ontario are responding to you and they're not interested in your junkets to Europe; they are interested in youth employment opportunities. If the minister has something to say today, we want to know it because we're not letting up on the question.

Hon Mr Sanderson: I first of all thank the member for Windsor-Sandwich for the tour she's taken us on of Ontario. I also think that was the longest question we've listened to, but perhaps I could just spend a few moments and put her at ease.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order, the member for Hamilton East is out of order. The member for Windsor-Sandwich is out of order.

Hon Mr Sanderson: Mr Speaker, I'm going to start again.

We on this side of the House are correcting 10 years of waste, abuse and mismanagement by you people first; 65 tax increases in the last 10 years; 33 by those fellows there; 32 by those there; 11 income tax increases. That is not the right climate for creating jobs, whether it's permanent jobs or summer jobs, and if you don't want to listen, you won't hear the good news. You obviously don't want to hear the good news. You should be ashamed of yourselves.

The Speaker: New question, third party. Leader of the third party.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I guess the students who are about to finish their programs this month are going to be able to take satisfaction from that response.

SERVICES FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Yesterday in the House, and this morning I understand in talking to reporters outside of cabinet, the minister refused to respond to questions regarding cuts the government may be planning to the disabled. We know that plans about changing the definition of "disabled" will save the government approximately \$70 million. Yesterday, in answer to my colleague from Rainy River, the minister

refused to give an unequivocal answer one way or the other with regard to cuts to the disabled and to programs to assist them. Can the minister now make it very clear, yes or no, are you planning cuts to the disabled?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Community and Social Services): I'd just like to preface something first of all. Unfortunately, as we're coming up to budget time, I know the members of the third party are looking for some hints in terms of what might be in the budget. I know the member for Rainy River yesterday went upon a little duck-hunting mission with a 12-gauge shotgun, blindfolded, happy at just trying to hit something up there in the air and not caring what he really hit.

First of all, we are committed to delivering services to those most in need. If the leader of the third party wants a definitive answer, we have no intention of eliminating the winter clothing and back-to-school allowance for children. Clearly, any time some sort of rumour comes about, members on the floor opposite embark upon some sort of scaremongering mission.

On the second part of the question—I will respond to that as well—we are not going to reduce services to help children or disabled people. We are committed to making those programs better. If I could repeat part of the message from yesterday, we are embarking upon and we have been doing consulting with the people clearly affected. We are trying to find ways to make the system better, and that's what this is all about, making the system better. I know the members over there are saying something else, but once again we are not—I hope that's very understandable—we are not going to reduce services to help children or disabled people. We are committed to making those programs better.

Mr Wildman: I was not engaging in fearmongering. As a matter of fact, I was attempting to give the minister an opportunity to assure the people who are disabled that they will not lose any of the programs and services they have now and that there will not be cuts, and in his ramblings the minister left the vulnerable people feeling even more vulnerable.

In the so-called Common Sense Revolution, on page 10, the Tories said, "Aid for seniors and the disabled will not be cut." Can the minister clearly assure disabled people who are now in receipt of assistance and programs that all those people will not be faced with cuts, either directly or indirectly, through changes in the definition of "disabled"?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: Maybe I should speak a little more slowly here. I will clearly indicate again that we are not—not, not—going to reduce services to help children or disabled people. We are looking for a way to make it better and that's why we've done this advisory committee. We're consulting with people to try to make the system better.

There's been clearly an opportunity before, and I can perhaps quote for you from the former minister again where he said, "If there's one thing that just about everyone agrees with, it is that Ontario's welfare system isn't working." He went on to say, "It's a confusing system."

Unlike the previous government, we are going to take the opportunity now to work with the disabled commun-

ity to ensure the system becomes better. We need to take out the confusion in the system. We need to make sure access to the system is better. That's what we're committed to do and that's what we continue to do.

1410

Mr Wildman: I'll speak as slowly as I can. Are you and your government intending to change the definition of "disability" in this province?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: We've made no decisions on that. We are consulting with the disabled community. This is really amazing because I suppose the leader of the third party wasn't expecting the answer he got, the fact that our government is not going to reduce services; I guess he was looking for something else. Unfortunately, that's the only answer I can give today, that we are not going to reduce services. I don't know how much of that he doesn't understand, but that's the answer I have to give today.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): New question.

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I've got a question to the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier said that for many people homelessness is a choice. Well, the Metro Toronto Advisory Committee on Homeless and Socially Isolated Persons tells us that there was a 38% increase in eviction applications last November over the year before, but one month after this government's attack on the poorest in our society. In January of this year, 1996, evictions were 25% higher than they were in January of last year. Dr Shah from the University of Toronto tells us that 50% of homeless people today in Toronto are women and children and that he doesn't know any child who would go out to be homeless by choice. How many people have died, how many more are going to die, because of this government's ruthless attack on poor children and their parents?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): None.

Mr Kormos: The Premier says none. The Premier spoke of his government and its commitment to the needy and the children and the disabled.

Stella Mae Williams was a constituent of mine. She was 48 years old in December 1995 and she had lived a lifetime of serious mental illness, in and out of hospitals and undergoing a succession of mental health treatments. At the age of 48, having raised her daughter with incredible difficulty—and her daughter in her own right having two little kids, Stella Mae's grandkids—Stella Mae Williams had finally started to get things together. Although still ill and still under treatment, she found a job, 10 to 15 hours a week working in a laundromat making minimum wage, to supplement the disability pension she had been receiving because of her disability under the Family Benefits Act.

Three weeks before Christmas of last year, Stella Mae Williams got a message from this government. It was a letter from this government's community and social services telling her that she was no longer eligible for a disability pension. She couldn't bear the prospect of being evicted, being among that 25% more people being evicted in January of this year.

The Speaker: Put your question.

Mr Kormos: I shall, Speaker. She couldn't stand the prospect of not being able to buy some modest gifts for

her two grandkids. She chose not to be homeless though, because, you see, three days after receiving that letter she took her own life. She died a victim of this government as readily as had this government, this Premier, pulled the trigger on that assassin's gun.

What does the Premier say to Stella Mae Williams and her family and grandchildren? Don't tell us that nobody has died. Your policies took the life of Stella Mae Williams, Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: Personal, individual tragedies are something that concern us all. To suggest that it is the policies of this government that had led to this I think is beneath the dignity of this Legislature in any leadership campaign.

Mr Kormos: I'm going beyond suggesting that it's the policies of this government that took Stella Mae Williams away from her daughter and grandchildren and that have caused the deaths of homeless people on the streets of Toronto and other cities during this past winter, the coldest of many years; I'm stating quite directly that it's the policies. I tell you this: It's remarkable, because Stella Mae's daughter wrote to the Premier, outlining the tragic circumstances of Stella Mae Williams's death, her having been told that no, she no longer qualified for a modest disability pension in Mike Harris's Ontario. The letter in return says:

"I'm sorry to hear about your mother and understand this must be a very difficult time." What an understatement. "I would like to assure you that our government remains committed to supporting the most vulnerable in our society. Thanks for writing." Signed by the Premier.

Premier, I put to you, is that an adequate response to the tragic loss of a mother and grandmother that was relayed to you in a letter by her daughter in January of this year?

Hon Mr Harris: I very much doubt that anything would be an adequate response to any individual tragedy. We do the best that we can.

In pointing out the failure of past policies to help the homeless, and in fact the dramatic increase in the use of past policies, never once would I have imputed the motive of any individual, Premier or cabinet minister that that was the ultimate goal. It's what happened, but to impute that motive and to raise and elevate an individual case, which I would not comment on, and to suggest that there is some response from the Premier that would somehow be satisfactory, I don't think there is a satisfactory response in that case. But I can tell you that we do the very best we possibly can to fix a rather intolerable situation for a number of people in the province of Ontario who are facing difficulty.

The Speaker: New question, the leader of the official opposition.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): Nevertheless, the unanswered question of whether funding for the disabled is to be cut is going to have to be answered.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): I will turn to the Attorney General with a question. Minister, the Common Sense Revolution promised that funding for

law enforcement and justice would be guaranteed. You are now saying that there will be cuts to the criminal law division of your ministry. Which is it? Will you be guaranteeing funding for law enforcement, or will you be cutting the number of people whose job it is to ensure that criminals are prosecuted?

Hon Charles Harnick (Attorney General, minister responsible for native affairs): There will be no cuts in the criminal law division that will imperil front-line services. In fact, we will continue the investment strategy that was commenced by the last government as a result of the Askov crisis, a crisis created as a result of the ignoring of a situation by the Liberal government during their time in office, where they had repeated warnings from the Supreme Court of Canada that they had to deal with a problem that they refused to deal with that was visited upon the last government, which properly began an investment strategy to deal with the intake and resolution of cases before the criminal courts. You have my commitment that the investment strategy will continue, and it will be continued aggressively, so that we can break the back of the Askov crisis created during the time the Liberals were in government.

Mrs McLeod: That is absolutely meaningless bluster on the part of the Attorney General on an issue as serious as this.

Minister, you have said that there will be cuts to the criminal law division of your ministry, and you admitted this morning that your cuts could result in a drastic reduction in the number of crown attorneys, the very people who ensure that criminals are prosecuted. I say to you that not only is that a flagrant violation of the campaign promise to protect law enforcement, it is an outrage. I do not understand how you could even be considering slashing the number of crown attorneys when Ontario already has the fewest number of prosecutors per capita in the country, and I certainly do not understand how you could be considering slashing the number of crown attorneys, as you admitted this morning you were looking at doing, when our courts are facing the largest backlog in cases they have seen since the Askov decision.

1420

Minister, will you assure us today, when you tell us blithely that cuts to your ministry are not going to affect the front-line administration of justice, will you assure the victims of crime that your cuts will not result in a single drunk driver, wife abuser or drug dealer getting off because there was not a prosecutor available to handle the case?

Hon Mr Harnick: This question from the leader of a party that was the cause of 60,000 cases being jettisoned from our courts is absolutely irresponsible. That's number one.

Number two, the Leader of the Opposition, whose party was responsible for 60,000 cases being jettisoned from our courts, takes a very selective approach towards what I've said. What I have said is that there will be no cuts to crown attorneys until there is a reduction in caseload to warrant it. That's what I said and that's what she had better start to hear as opposed to the selective things she does hear. Further, I will tell you, as I said a moment ago, that I will continue the investment strategy; in fact, I will do that with new money.

PUBLIC HOUSING

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): In the absence of the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, I have a question for the Premier. As you know, your Common Sense Revolution commits your government to develop a plan to sell more than 84,000 units owned by the Ontario Housing Corp. Your colleague the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has been going around this province assuring tenants that they will be fully consulted before any sell-off happens. Can the Premier share with us and table in the House all offers the government has received from the private sector for Ontario public housing stock so the public can know what offers you are considering?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): We haven't even asked for a request for proposals. A number of people in Ontario, in Canada, have said, "If you're interested, we can do it, provide lower rents, provide better service and do that," so we've had interest of inquiry. The minister may have more information, but my understanding is that we're not anywhere close to even calling for a request for proposals. We wouldn't do so without talking to tenants, of course.

Mr Bisson: I find that quite amazing. I have here in my hands a submission from Citibank—that is, Citibank Canada, a subsidiary of Citibank in the United States—a 56-page proposal they sent to your government to give options about how you can privatize the Ontario Housing stock. They are saying within this particular proposal that rents would have to go up, not down. So you certainly have had offers. In their submission they note that the political nature of this issue is such that Citibank intends this report to be an internal government document only. They don't want you sharing this with the public because even they recognize how devastating your policy would be to the tenants of this province.

I understand that you haven't accepted this offer, that you've rejected it, but I have to ask you, why don't you come clean? What are you hiding? Why don't you tell us and the tenants in this province what you're considering when it comes to the privatization of housing stock in the province? Come clean, Premier.

Hon Mr Harris: We have not had any requests for proposals. We have not, at this point in time, taken a position. There may be—in fact I think there is a proposal. I read in the paper that Citibank had sent us some information, but it was unsolicited and it is part of correspondence. I don't know. If you have a copy of it, release it, if you think it doesn't conflict with any freedom of information to do so.

Let me assure you that we get unsolicited proposals all the time; we get correspondence all the time. What I can tell you is that when the minister is able to come forward, and with consultation with others in preparation of anything of this nature, we will consult with the tenants, we will consult with others and we'll make everything fully public.

PHYSICIAN SHORTAGE

Mr Ernie Hardeman (Oxford): My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, as I'm sure you are aware,

Oxford is a predominantly rural riding about two hours outside of Toronto and an hour outside of London. It's a wonderful area in which to live, but we have a shortage of doctors.

I know this issue has been of concern to you and I understand that in your discussions with the Ontario Medical Association, you have agreed to let doctors' organizations implement a plan to correct the situation. Can you tell me when this plan will be implemented?

Hon Jim Wilson (Minister of Health): I'm pleased to report to the House that the Ministry of Health and the Ontario Medical Association have sat down to discuss primary care reform. Prior to that discussion, though, all members will know, this government had extended new money above the \$3.8-billion physician services pool, fee-for-service pool, in the province. That new money currently was used by some 67 communities to provide a \$70-an-hour, on-call emergency fee for doctors in those communities, and we're now receiving letters from communities throughout rural and northern Ontario saying that for the first time in many years they have a full complement of doctors, thanks to that program.

As you know, it's a serious problem, and I'm sure it's a very serious issue in the member for Oxford's part of the province. We have over 70 communities currently enrolled in the underserved area program, which provides tax-free allowances of up to \$10,000 per year for four years, \$40,000 tax-free on top of what physicians receive from the fee-for-service pool. That's a 30% increase since 1990, so the problem is getting worse.

Just after the vote tonight we'll be sitting down again with the OMA to try to come up with a plan for primary care reform which would finally put an end to the clawback, or the 10% recovery, and allow doctors a predictable income and a more stable life. That's what we're working towards.

Mr Hardeman: I also understand that if the plan does not work, through Bill 26 you have the powers to ensure more doctors practise in underserved areas. If the OMA plan fails to reach the objective, will you step in and ensure that all Ontarians have equal access to health care? If this is required, how long will you allow before you implement the plan?

Hon Mr Wilson: That's a very good question from my colleague the member for Oxford. I will take this opportunity to clear the air with respect to Bill 26 and the billing number limits in there. It is a temporary moratorium. To date, we've not proclaimed that part. We've proclaimed all other sections, but I gave a commitment at a conference at the University of Western Ontario on Sunday, the day before the vote on Bill 26, to the undergraduate medical students who were representing all the medical schools and undergraduate medical students in the province that we would not implement a billing number moratorium in 1996.

However, if we don't have progress in primary care reform, if we don't get ourselves, along with the OMA, out of this situation of the 10% recoveries and the clawback, if we don't improve the health care system with respect to the delivery of primary care services and access to physicians' services in the province, then we will have to do what four other provinces have done, and that's bring in billing number restrictions.

This simply would say that in certain areas of the province—there is only a handful right now—we would not be providing a billing number for a new graduate to go into those areas. That's a better way than four other provinces that have dealt with this issue and it's something we don't want to have to do, but at the end of the day, if we don't come up with some other solutions—we're actively working on those—if we don't have something else come forward, we will implement those sections of Bill 26 which will help you to get doctors in Oxford.

1430

PUBLIC HOUSING

Mr Alvin Curling (Scarborough North): My question is to the Premier. You have pledged to get rid of rent control, and you have already reduced welfare by 22%, and now you want to sell off public housing. You say: "Trust us. We will increase the number of shelter allowances." But housing advocates are afraid you will do this by lowering the average subsidy that individuals receive.

Is it the intention of your government to reduce the shelter allowance housing subsidies given to individuals?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): It's our intention—and I understand that before a budget comes up and business plans come out that one of the strategies is to try to raise everything and get yeses or noes and then whatever's left will be in the budget.

Let me assure the member of this: It is the intention of this government to make sure that tenants, particularly those most vulnerable in the province of Ontario, are better off after any changes we make than before.

Mr Curling: Regardless of what the intention is, Mr Premier, the intention is to get an honest answer out of you. You haven't given an honest answer. You dodge around it. I asked you if you're going to reduce the subsidy allowance. You responded to a report that was done by Citibank, which is a New York firm, as you know—you said you weren't quite aware of this—but it gives detailed analysis of how to sell off public housing.

Will you explain to us why you'd like to sell off public housing, the homes of these people, to an American-based company? Will you make a commitment that if you intend to do this—you have said in your Common Sense Revolution that you intend to sell off public housing—not only will you involve the residents, but you'll involve the church groups, the municipalities and other non-profit agencies involved in public housing to partake in the discussions when you decide to sell off the homes of the most vulnerable in our society?

Hon Mr Harris: Let me give you the assurance that we'll even involve Alvin Curling.

WORKERS' COMPENSATION

Mr David Christopherson (Hamilton Centre): My question is to the minister responsible for gutting the WCB. We know that you've had a great deal of trouble admitting that our reforms—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order. The member for Etobicoke West is out of order and not in his seat.

Mr Christopherson: —to turn around the finances of the WCB. In fact, you recently admitted in a newspaper article that the unfunded liability dropped again by nearly half a billion dollars in 1995, and that would be the second straight year since our Bill 165 was passed. In fact, you said, "When you see the final numbers they are compelling." Well, it seems that you're keeping those figures a secret.

You have gone to great lengths in your discussion paper and in your comments to create a phoney fiscal crisis in the WCB, as your colleague in the Ministry of Education admitted he was going to do a short while ago, and the reason you're creating this phoney crisis is to give you the excuse that you want to slash benefits to injured workers and to allow private insurance companies to get their hands on parts of the WCB. The fact of the matter is that the unfunded liability started to soar in the 1980s under a previous Tory government, and now has begun to decline under changes our government made.

It seems as if you don't want the truth to get in the way of creating your phoney crisis. To dispel that, will you table the figures that you said are so compelling today in the House? Will you table those figures?

Hon Cameron Jackson (Minister without Portfolio [Workers' Compensation Board]): I want to thank the member for his question. He is well aware, as a former member of Privy Council, that these figures are tabled by the WCB, and it is my understanding that they are either being tabled today or tomorrow, but the responsibility is vested with the current CEO. It is also my understanding that the member opposite has received a preliminary copy of it. He may not have.

However, I just want to assure the members of the House that his former government may have felt that an \$11-billion, \$12-billion, \$13-billion, \$14-billion unfunded liability was not a major concern in this province, but I want to assure the member opposite that an \$11-billion unfunded liability with future prospects for growth—and that unfunded liability may drop a little this year, go up again next year, but the prospect in the year 2014 is we'll still have a \$13-billion or \$14-billion unfunded liability in this province.

We believe for the safety and security of injured workers today and in the future that the unfunded liability is too high and must be reduced. That's a commitment of the Mike Harris government.

Mr Christopherson: The fact of the matter is that the unfunded liability also has with it \$6 billion worth of assets that the WCB has, and indeed two years in a row now we're seeing the figures come down. You're creating a phoney crisis so you can go after injured workers. Injured workers are not fooled by this phoney crisis.

With regard to figures and what's true and what isn't, you make the statement in your document, among other things—and I'm quoting from your document, Minister—that, "Ontario's average rate is estimated to be over 40% higher than the average rate in neighbouring Great Lakes states," and yet a report commissioned by the federal government to show the competitiveness of Ontario—the

report was done by KPMG Peat Marwick management consultants—shows that our WCB rates are lower than those in the States.

Since there's a discrepancy between what you state in your document and what the federal report shows, I want to know about the documentation you've used to justify the statements you've made in here. My staff, our research staff, have attempted to get that background material from your office. We have not been successful. Minister, I want to know if you will table all the background documentation that you used to justify the figures you put in your report. Will you table that material, Minister?

Hon Mr Jackson: I want to reassure the member that in fact—

Mr Christopherson: Yes or no?

Hon Mr Jackson: You've raised questions about the size of the unfunded liability, you've raised questions about the performance of the WCB's bottom line for 1995, and you've referenced the fact that there may have been about half a billion dollars surface that wasn't necessarily budgeted for by the WCB.

I want the member to be apprised of the fact that the largest single component of that increase in income to the WCB in the last year, in 1995, was over \$300 million directly attributed to private sector growth in payroll in the province of Ontario. I'm here to assure the member opposite that the major factor in the growth in that private sector employment and the assessment base on which there was a growth in revenue was a result of the policies of Mike Harris and the new opportunities and the hope that the private sector found in this province as of midpoint in 1995, and its manifestation is in a healthier bottom-line position for 1995 because of that growth.

TAX REFORM

Mr Joseph Spina (Brampton North): My question today is directed to my colleague the Minister of Finance. Minister, recent statements in the paper reported that the Atlantic provinces are going to be signing a deal with the federal government to harmonize the provincial sales tax and the GST. Minister, what steps have you taken, if any, regarding this matter?

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): I might say that negotiations right now with the federal government are nowhere. As I have indicated several times, the most recent proposal to us from the federal government was simply to harmonize the two taxes at a rate of 15%, which would increase taxation in the province of Ontario approximately \$2 billion a year and it would—

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): Well, you're taking money from everybody else.

1440

Hon Mr Eves: I might say to my Liberal colleague opposite that apparently he's in favour of this measure. It would be interesting to know exactly where his party stands on this important issue, so that Sheila Copps doesn't return to Queen's Park, so that she has to remain in Ottawa.

The reality is that we are not into increasing taxation by \$2 billion a year, nor are we into transferring the onus

from the business community to the consumers of the province to the tune of \$2 billion to \$3 billion a year.

Mr Spina: Minister, the concern I have is also from the point of view of the small businesses of this province. With our direction in attempting to reduce the amount of red tape, regulation and compliance procedures for our small businesses in this province, can you assure me that the real job creators of this province would not have to bear the burden of the cost of harmonization to these small businesses?

Hon Mr Eves: We have absolutely no intention of passing the cost of any type of harmonization on to the small business community. We are not in favour of increasing taxation in the province of Ontario. We have a firm belief to reduce taxation, regulation and red tape and that's what we're all about.

PROVINCIAL PARKS

Mr John C. Cleary (Cornwall): My question is for the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. For the past six years, residents and visitors to eastern Ontario have been deprived of one of our greatest natural wonders, the parks of the St Lawrence. Over the same period, I've been trying to convince your government and the previous administration that opening the parks would be good for tourism, good for the unemployed, good for students and good for neighbourhood restaurants, convenience stores, grocery stores, service stations and business.

As the minister knows full well, a number of investors and projects have been brought to his attention, but still there is no word on when these parks can be opened. A business development plan was supposed to have been filed by the minister's office at the end of January, but I haven't seen it yet either. Can the minister tell the House when his government intends to act on a plan that will bring economic renewal to eastern Ontario and jobs for our students and the unemployed?

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): To the honourable member for Cornwall, I'm very happy to say that we have every intention of making sure the parks of the St Lawrence are run properly so that they create jobs and economic development in eastern Ontario. I quite share the member's concerns. Our party is very concerned as well as you.

I come back to what we are trying to accomplish in this province. As you know, it's to have a proper economic climate that is going to produce jobs and economic activity. I think the honourable member is fully aware of our policy and I reiterated some of it earlier today. I think when the summer is finished, it's going to have been a very prosperous season for eastern Ontario, basically because of the excellent tourist facilities in that region.

Mr Cleary: Minister, how many times are you going to stand in the House and give the people of eastern Ontario the same old song and dance?

On October 26, 1995, I raised the matter in the House to the minister and he said: "The commission is undergo-

ing an extensive business planning exercise. I plan to receive the results by the end of January 1996." Minister, do you know what this date is today? It's April 2.

During the hearings on the estimates committee in February the minister said something like he said again today: "...government doesn't create jobs, the private sector creates jobs. In Ontario, we are getting government out of the face of business. At the same time, I am confident that business will take up the challenge as well as seize the opportunity to grow and provide jobs."

I know several individuals and groups that have submitted sound proposals that would see these parks open, but they haven't heard anything for months. I am waiting for the minister's response to setting up a meeting that was requested with the municipal council of Charlottenburgh township more than a month ago to discuss the Raisin River and Charlottenburgh parks.

These investment opportunities are not going to wait forever for you and your government that isn't going to have the commission run the parks. When will you at least start forming the kind of partnership with municipalities and the private sector that you and your party have been so interested in talking about for months?

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The question has been asked.

Hon Mr Saunderson: I'm pleased to say to the honourable member for Cornwall that Mr Villeneuve and I had a very interesting and informative meeting with the people from the St Lawrence Parks Commission just in the last few days.

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): Why don't you tell us about the meeting you just had with Runciman?

Hon Mr Saunderson: If you'd let me talk, I'll tell you. The problem with you people over there is you don't like to hear the good news. What these people told us is that they have very innovative and creative ways to manage the facility, something that they were not encouraged to do when you were in power, and may I close by saying that it was your party that closed those parks down, and you should be ashamed of yourselves as well.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: Pursuant to section 34(a) of the standing orders, I intend to raise the subject matter of my question to the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism on the adjournment of the House and I will give you written notice.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon Ernie L. Eves (Deputy Premier, Minister of Finance and Government House Leader): I move that Mrs Ross and Mr Tilson exchange places in the order of precedence for private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Is it the pleasure of the House the motion carry? Carried.

PETITIONS

NORTH YORK BRANSON HOSPITAL

Mr Monte Kwinter (Wilson Heights): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee has recommended that the North York Branson Hospital merge with the York-Finch hospital; and

"Whereas this recommendation will remove emergency and inpatient services currently provided by North York Branson Hospital, which will seriously jeopardize medical care and the quality of health for the growing population which the hospital serves, many being elderly people who in numerous cases require treatment for life-threatening medical conditions;

"We petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to reject the recommendation contained within the final report of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council hospital restructuring committee as it pertains to North York Branson Hospital, so that it retains, at minimum, emergency and inpatient services."

I have affixed my signature.

COMMON SENSE REVOLUTION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have a petition signed by hundreds of people in my riding.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Mike Harris said on May 30, 1995, 'If I don't live up to anything that I have promised to do and committed to do, I will resign,' and

"Whereas Mike Harris promised on May 3, 1995, 'No cuts to health care spending,' but in his November 29 economic statement we see \$1.3 billion, or 18%, in cuts to hospital spending over the next three years, and a further \$225 million cut from the health care budget; and

"Whereas Mike Harris has clearly broken his promise to defend health care cuts and funding; and

"Whereas Mike Harris promised, in the Common Sense Revolution, that 'This plan will create more than 725,000 new jobs,' but in his November 29 economic statement, we see a prediction of only 253,000 jobs created over the next three years and an unemployment rate of 8.6% in two years, which is the same as it is today; and

"Whereas Mike Harris has clearly broken his promise to create significant jobs in this province; and

"Whereas Mike Harris promised, in the Common Sense Revolution, that 'Aid for seniors and the disabled will not be cut,' but in his November 29 economic statement, Mike Harris is cutting the Ontario drug benefit plan and making seniors and the vulnerable pay for their drugs; and

"Whereas Mike Harris has clearly broken his promise to seniors and the disabled;

"We, the undersigned, demand that Mike Harris keep his word and resign immediately."

I will affix my signature to this petition.

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Ted Arnott (Wellington): I have a petition to the Legislature of Ontario and it reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned, request that the Legislature of Ontario not approve any tax cut until the causes of poverty and unemployment in Ontario are dealt with effectively and until the province's debt and deficit are paid down."

1450

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): Like the member for Wellington, I have two petitions on the same subject, which read in part:

"We, the undersigned, request that the Legislature of Ontario not approve any tax cut until the causes of poverty and unemployment in Ontario are dealt with effectively and until the province's debt and deficit are paid down."

Two of these petitions, from my electoral district.

GOVERNMENT POLICY

Mr Jim Flaherty (Durham Centre): I have two petitions signed by a number of constituents in my riding of Durham Centre. I disagree with the contents of the petitions, but present them at their request as my constituents:

"To the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the most vulnerable, the poor, the disabled, the battered and abused, the single parent with no child care, the unemployed, have suffered most in the recent cutbacks to our social safety net; and

"Whereas the cancelling of rules for the protection of the environment threatens such treasures as the Temagami wilderness, now open for commercial exploitation; and

"Whereas government action to trim the civil service by at least 13,000 jobs will deepen our unemployment problem and make us less able to be a caring community; and

"Whereas alternate plans to effectively control the deficit have received scant attention;

"Therefore, we petition the Parliament of Ontario to enact such measures as are necessary to provide employment, reduce the hardships of poverty, all the while preserving the environment through sustainable development."

I affix my name as required.

MUNICIPAL ZONING BYLAWS

Mr Gilles E. Morin (Carleton East): "We collectively, as residents of the city of Gloucester, in the area known specifically as Pineview are extremely concerned for the safety of our families and children. We strongly object to uses contained within the premises known municipally as 124-1449 Ridgebrook Drive. This unit is currently being used as a rooming house, which contravenes the city of Gloucester zoning bylaws and the bylaws of Condominium Corp no. 70, which stipulate single-family occupancy only. In addition, this unit is known to house persons dangerous to public safety, as demonstrated by a recent murder attempt on the premises as well as numerous actions required by the police force.

"We, the undersigned, demand that the proper authorities empowered to deal with such matters ensure the immediate discontinuance of the illegal uses and activities contained within 124-1449 Ridgebrook Drive."

I affix my signature.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

"Transportation Minister Al Palladini is proposing legislation that will cost many towns their bus service. Bus companies are currently required to provide service for smaller towns as a condition of being given the rights to high-profit routes and charter markets. Minister Palladini's plan to deregulate will eliminate all conditions and requirements. As a result, hundreds of smaller communities like ours will lose bus service.

"Minister, people in smaller towns need bus service just as much as people in big cities. We depend upon buses to visit friends and family, to get to appointments in nearby towns, to ship our Christmas presents and to receive our repair parts. The undersigned call upon the members of the Legislative Assembly to oppose bus deregulation and the elimination of our bus service."

This is signed by 15 individuals, and I have affixed my signature to it as well.

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Bill Grimmett (Muskoka-Georgian Bay): I have a petition from approximately 20 of my constituents relating to the tax cuts. It appears to be in standard form, and I'm submitting it on their behalf today.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I have a petition to the Legislature of the province of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, believe that rent control abolition would lead to a steep rise in rent through the persistent shortage of affordable housing in Hamilton-Wentworth. Tenants, who are among the most affected by ongoing mass layoffs, wage cuts and hiring freezes, and senior citizens on fixed incomes will suffer greatly if rent controls are abolished. We are not in favour of the proposed abolition of rent controls by the provincial government."

I've assigned my signature to the petition.

SCARBOROUGH GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I have a petition today signed by a number of residents from the city of Scarborough. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the recommendations of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council to close inpatient paediatric beds, the special care nursery and the burn unit at Scarborough General Hospital resulting in significantly reduced access to paediatric, newborn and burn care for a large geographic area of Scarborough; and

"Whereas the paediatric unit, special care nursery and burn unit at Scarborough General Hospital provide very cost-efficient, quality care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to:

"(1) Continue paediatric services including inpatient paediatric beds,

"(2) Continue special care nursery services,

"(3) Continue and combine Metropolitan Toronto's burn care

"At Scarborough General Hospital!"

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I have a petition that's addressed to Premier Mike Harris, Minister Al Leach and members of the Ontario Legislature:

"Whereas accessibility is a right and not a privilege;

"Whereas changes your government has suggested to the Ontario Building Code threaten to remove that right for thousands of Ontario voters;

"Whereas we oppose any change that would limit the scope of building code regulations dealing with accessibility; your government's proposal, Back to Basics, would eliminate 20 years of progress towards accessibility for people with disabilities;

"Whereas accessibility is a principle of the Ontario Building Code that must be preserved and improved upon;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call upon the Legislature to reconsider your government's position on this issue."

I've affixed my signature to it.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): I have a petition signed by about 45 members of my community of London and environs:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Transportation Minister Al Palladini is proposing legislation that will cost many towns their bus services.

"Bus companies are currently required to provide service for smaller towns as a condition of being given the rights to high-profit routes and charter markets. Minister Palladini's plan to deregulate will eliminate all conditions and requirements. As a result, hundreds of smaller communities like ours will lose bus service.

"Minister, people in smaller towns need bus service just as much as people in big cities. We depend upon buses to visit friends and family, to get to appointments in nearby towns, to ship our Christmas presents and to receive our repair parts. The undersigned call upon the members of the Legislative Assembly to oppose bus deregulation and the elimination of our bus service."

I'm proud to affix my signature.

TRANSITION HOUSE

Mr Pat Hoy (Essex-Kent): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Transition House in Chatham has provided emergency shelter to troubled or abused youth as well as support, counselling and life skills training since 1990, and operating on a five-year budget of \$865,000, they have counselled over 400 youth and served over 20,000 meals;

"Whereas the city of Chatham and the county of Kent rely on Transition House to meet the needs of its troubled youth and there is no other facility to serve the needs of the community;

"Whereas it has been shown that massive cuts to health services, school systems and social services have a definite impact on the statistics of children and youth in crisis;

"Be it therefore resolved that we, the undersigned, urge the government of Ontario to reverse its decision to cut the funding of Transition House in Chatham."

It's signed by a number of residents from Kent county and I affix my signature to it.

1500

FAMILY SUPPORT OFFICES

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): The people of northwestern Ontario have spoken loud and clear regarding their support for the family support plan regional offices, and I've got a petition signed by 500 people here that states:

"We, being residents and taxpayers of Ontario, hereby wish to notify you that we oppose the centralization of the family support plan office and in particular the closure of the Thunder Bay branch of the family support plan for the following reasons:

"Whereas the regional offices are necessary for the timely enforcement of support orders agreements;

"Whereas the Thunder Bay regional office currently has 3,639 active files and a compliance rate of 67%; in 1995 the Thunder Bay regional office collected over \$11 million, of which \$1,743,769.09 was returned to the Treasurer of Ontario; the funds recovered from the Treasurer of Ontario more than pay for its annual operating cost of \$609,000; should this compliance rate decrease, children will suffer and there will be an increase of enrolment for social assistance;

"Whereas the Thunder Bay branch region covers from White River to the Ontario-Manitoba border; regional staff has established excellent experience and contacts for tracing and locating delinquent support payers in the northwest due to their familiarity with the region;

"Whereas seasonal employment and variable support provisions are common to the northwest; consistent monitoring of these cases is essential to the proper enforcement of support orders agreements; delays on acting on these adjustments would result in increased enrolment for social assistance and increased court actions against FSP within an overworked court system;

"Whereas it is proposed that cases will not be assigned to a particular case worker; this will result in non-efficient, repetitive and time-consuming work as each time a file is actioned the file will have to be fully reviewed as the provisions of each court order are unique; difficulties will occur when staff interpret the support provi-

sions differently and it is proposed staff will only act upon issue-driven cases, so not all cases in arrears will be reviewed; the regional employees are familiar with the cases and are available to meet with clients and act in a timely fashion;

"Therefore, we hereby respectfully request that you give consideration to our concerns and reject any proposal for the closure of the Thunder Bay branch family support plan."

I sign my name.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have a petition from hundreds of people from the area of Timmins that reads as follows:

"Whereas security of tenure or the right to remain in our homes is a basic need of all humans; and

"Whereas uncontrolled rent increases force many tenants from their homes for both economic and other reasons; and

"Whereas the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Premier of Ontario have both expressed publicly their desire to abolish rent control;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to protect the security of tenure of Ontario tenants by ensuring that rent controls remain in effect in this province."

PRIVATIZATION OF ONTARIO HYDRO

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I have several petitions from across the province concerning Hydro. These petitions read:

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the matter of selling Ontario Hydro is likely to come before the Legislature in the near future; and

"Whereas we, the undersigned residents of Ontario, who have, through the payment of electricity rates, paid for Ontario Hydro, are concerned about privatization of Ontario Hydro, leading to higher rates, lower reliability and compromised nuclear safety,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Please preserve the public ownership of Ontario Hydro and refuse to sell this important public asset."

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Pursuant to standing order 34(a), the member for Windsor-Sandwich has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism concerning youth employment. This matter will be debated today at 6 pm.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees (Ms Deborah Deller): Want of confidence motion number 1: Mrs McLeod.

Mr David Turnbull (York Mills): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I believe we have all-party agreement to split the time equally between the parties.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): It's agreed? Agreed.

WANT OF CONFIDENCE MOTION

Mrs McLeod moved, pursuant to standing order 43(a), want of confidence motion number 1:

Whereas the Conservative government has clearly broken every single promise it made with respect to protecting health care; and

Whereas the government broke its promise not to cut "one cent" from health care spending when it cut more than \$1.3 billion from Ontario hospitals; and

Whereas the government broke its promise that, "Aid for seniors and the disabled will not be cut" when it introduced a new user fee on the drugs that sick seniors, disabled persons and the poor are prescribed by their doctors; and

Whereas the government broke its promise that there would be "no new user fees" when it introduced Bill 26, which will add \$225 million worth of user fees to the Ontario drug benefit plan; and

Whereas the government is now planning, through Bill 26, to bestow upon the Minister of Health new unilateral powers which would allow him to close any hospital in the province without public input; and

Whereas the government is now planning, through Bill 26, to grant the Premier and cabinet new powers that will usurp the rights and privileges of the elected members of the Legislature and thereby the rights of every person in the province;

Therefore, pursuant to standing order 43(a), the House no longer has confidence in the government.

Mrs Lyn McLeod (Leader of the Opposition): I want particularly to note, in placing the motion, that the date on which this motion was placed before the House was December 5 of last year. You will recognize that it was placed immediately after the November financial statement had stripped \$1.3 billion from hospital budgets. It was placed after the government had indicated it was prepared to find some \$225 million to pay for its tax cut by unconscionably charging seniors and the disabled for their drugs. It was after Bill 26, that infamous bully bill, was introduced on that same infamous day that Mike Harris broke his supposedly sacred promise not to cut health care. This motion was tabled before the government had been forced to debate Bill 26, forced against its will to subject Bill 26 to some public scrutiny.

Today we ask, as this motion is called, what have we seen since December 5, when this motion was originally introduced? I suggest to you that we have seen absolutely nothing that would restore any sense of confidence in this government and particularly in this government's commitment to health care.

What about the \$1.3-billion cut to the budgets of our hospitals? That still stands. What we have seen since then are hundreds of nurses and other front-line health care workers losing their jobs as hospitals close beds and cut back services to find their share of the tax cut dollars.

It was just yesterday that Peel Memorial Hospital announced it was going to cut beds and would lose 200 jobs to pay for its \$4.6-million budget shortfall. Sadly, Peel was not the first and it will certainly not be the last.

There are estimates of how many health care workers are going to lose their jobs in this province just because of the cuts this government announced last November: Metropolitan Toronto, 2,550 health care workers to be laid off; northeastern Ontario, 350; northwestern Ontario, 65; eastern Ontario, 820 people to lose their jobs in the health care sector; southwestern Ontario, 1,315 people are likely to lose their jobs as front-line health care workers; 460 people in central west; and another 175 people in central east. That's what we've seen since this motion was tabled on December 5.

What about the plan that was in place last December 5 to charge the sick elderly and the disabled for their drugs? Here again the government has decided that it's going to stick to its guns. They seem to have a sense that you've got to get tough with these privileged few, these disabled and the elderly sick, who somehow aren't carrying their fair share of the tax cut. You certainly wouldn't want a little human compassion or a little bit of concern to get in the way of finding a way to pay for the tax cut.

Then we had the debate around Bill 26, the bill that had been tabled when this motion was tabled, the bill that is now passed after almost every presenter in two weeks of hearings across this province expressed concerns about the bill, passed after a week of amendments which barely touched the first sections of the bill and passed after this government turned a deaf ear to any changes other than a few face-saving gestures, and we had to fight for hours to get those.

1510

The only real changes this government was forced to accept to the health care sections of Bill 26 were amendments protecting the privacy of patient records. You'll remember what a contentious issue that was, because the Minister of Health insisted that there was absolutely no danger to patients' records or to the confidentiality of their most private personal medical information. Unfortunately, the privacy commissioner disagreed with the Minister of Health, and the Minister of Health was embarrassed enough that he had to take action to change that section of the bill.

As we place this non-confidence motion today, let me ask whether anybody can have any confidence in a government that says it won't touch a penny of the health care budget and then takes \$1.3 billion away from our hospitals; and whether anybody can have confidence in a government that says there are going to be no new user fees and then brings in user fees for drugs for seniors and the disabled. Can you trust a government that is so ready to disregard what it calls its most sacred commitment in order to deliver a completely irresponsible campaign promise of giving a tax cut to the wealthy?

Let me further ask whether you can have confidence in any government that is so desperate to make its cuts fast that it would ram through a bill giving itself unprecedented powers to control the health care system that it is already savaging with its spending cuts. Do you have any

confidence in a government and a Minister of Health that won't admit they're wrong until they're simply embarrassed into it and who won't worry about who or what they hurt unless they think that they have at last crossed a line that will get them into real political trouble?

I submit to you that the public of Ontario does not trust the Tories on health care. Thousands have expressed their concerns to us in writing. Thousands have said that they agree with us that this Premier, Mike Harris, is hazardous to our health. Yet this government, a government that nobody trusts on health care, has given itself the power to control the health care system in this province. That's what we saw on January 29 when Bill 26 became law.

That's what Bill 26 did, because with the powers of that bill, this government can now determine which doctors will practise in our communities. They can decide what medical treatments and what medications will be given. The Minister of Health can shut down our hospitals, or he can step in and take them over, or he can tell somebody else to go in and do it for him. This government can deny payment for medical services it doesn't think were necessary even after the services were given. Can we trust Jim Wilson with these kinds of powers? In fact, should any Minister of Health have or want these kinds of powers?

I think somebody in Jim Wilson's office actually understood that the public doesn't want the Minister of Health, neither this Minister of Health nor any Minister of Health, or anyone but their doctor deciding what medical treatment they'll get. That's why they've tried to hide the fact that Bill 26 leaves the general manager of OHIP deciding what medical treatment is going to be paid for.

The ministry sent out a press release. The press release said that the decision to withhold payment for medical services to a patient would be made on the advice of a physician. The actual amendment says that the general manager of OHIP just has to check with a physician, any physician, not necessarily the patient's physician, and then the general manager of OHIP will act according to his own judgement of what was medically necessary. The general manager of OHIP, the very man who has been challenged by this government and this minister to help them cut down on their OHIP billings, will be deciding how a doctor should treat a patient. The press release that day was deliberately misleading the public.

When the government wants to mislead the public on such an important issue as who decides what medical treatment will be given, I suggest it does not do a lot to build trust in how this government is going to use these enormous powers that it has given itself to manage our access to health care.

There's another strange thing about this government: It wants the power to do whatever it wants to do to control health care costs and to make the cuts that it needs fast, but it really doesn't want the responsibility for the decisions that are going to be made.

We saw Jim Wilson refusing to listen to the concerns of virtually every person who was concerned about the government's power to come in and close down hospitals. Everyone urged him not to delegate this responsibility to

his new restructuring commission. It's bad enough to have unilateral decisions imposed on communities when their hospital's going to be shut down, but it's even worse when the person coming in to make that decision is an unelected person with no political accountability of any kind.

But Jim Wilson wants to wash his hands of any actual exercise of this new power that he has. He said publicly this week that he's actually afraid the public might blame him for the decisions that would be made, these tough decisions that they want to take pride in making. I find it passing strange that he wants the power and not the responsibility, even when Bill 26 protects him from any legal responsibility for any problems, but the minister thinks that he and Mike Harris are just getting far too much blame already.

So I quote the health minister when he said, "What happens to Mike Harris and company is that we get accused of being slash-and-burn and having to deliver bad news all the time." Mr Wilson was pleading for a little help from the hospitals, a little sense of partnership. I wonder where the sense of partnership was when that same minister cut the hospitals' budgets by \$1.3 billion, when he decided to give himself the power to take over the hospital board if he didn't think they were acting in the public interest, and the only concession he made to partnership then was to finally agree to give them 14 days' notice before the takeovers happen.

There is no question that Mike Harris and Jim Wilson and this Conservative government are being accused of hurting health care, because they are hurting health care, and they will be blamed for closing down the hospitals of this province because they will be responsible for closing down the hospitals of this province.

This government made a huge, huge mistake with Bill 26. The Premier said that he thought they were losing the public relations battle. Well, they lost a lot more than that. They lost any shred of public confidence that this government was really concerned about health care. Bill 26 made it only too clear that it was cuts and not a concern for health care that was the priority for this government, and it will continue to lose public support if it continues to attack health care to pay for its foolish tax cut.

I find this week that even the government seems to have realized it still has a problem. It has tried very hard over and over again in answers to questions in this House and questions from the media to say: "No, no, we haven't broken our promise. We're not really cutting health care. We're going to put all the money back before the next election. We'll keep our promise somewhere in the future."

Well, I guess the line wasn't selling, because now they seem to be thinking of putting the money back this year. And the questions are still there: Where? Where is the money going to be? And why did the hospital budgets have to be cut if the government's not cutting health care? There's no restructuring yet. There's no savings realized. The minister hasn't come in with his heavy hammer and actually shut down the hospitals yet. So if the government's not going to cut health care in this budget after all, will it put the money back in the hospital

budgets so that we don't have to have the cutbacks in our front-line health care, which is where that care is needed most? Or is Jim Wilson going to have his little political pot of gold to dispense as he sees fit and where he sees the maximum political benefit?

I say to you that this really is politics at its cynical worst. If this government is not going to cut the health care budget in this year's budget, then let this government tell the Peel Memorial Hospital board right now that it doesn't need to close beds and it doesn't need to lay off 200 workers, because listen to what the Peel hospital is facing just to pay for its 5.6% cut.

They're going to reduce paediatric beds from 30 to 20. What happens if a 21st child in Peel gets sick and needs that hospital bed that's been cut?

They're going to reduce their obstetrics area from labour, delivery and post-deliveries to one single room. I don't know exactly how you achieve that, but I particularly don't know what that's going to mean to the care of women who are going to be delivering some 4,000 babies in the Peel hospital this year.

Peel hospital is going to reduce a medical care unit. They're going to close two beds in intensive care for another week. I wonder what happens if you have more intensive-care patients than you have beds, because it seems to me that heart attacks don't actually follow planning rules; they don't understand that there are efficiency guidelines in place in the hospital. But there is no question that those heart attack victims and their families will understand about budget cuts in health care when they cannot get the health care they need when and where they need it, and they will hold this government responsible for that.

1520

The results in Peel: Longer waiting lists for emergency services, longer waits for a hospital bed, delays for people waiting for surgery; and people are already waiting seven weeks for surgery in Peel. This is not good patient care; this is desperate budget cutting and this is what is happening right across this province.

So I say to Jim Wilson, the Minister of Health, that he should tell us what assurance he can give to the people in Peel—which incidentally is a growing area which has been facing health care pressures for years now—what assurance will he give to the people in Peel that they can get the health care they need when and where they need it, and what assurance Jim Wilson and Mike Harris can give to people right across this province in any community that they can get the health care they need when and where they need it.

I say to the Minister of Health that he and Mike Harris and Ernie Eves are responsible for the attacks on our health care system. They are not making these cuts because of past overspending, as the finance minister wants to say; they are making them because they need to find at least \$5 billion to pay for a tax cut. If this government has decided it won't fund its tax cut by taking money out of the health care budget this year, then let it put that money back into our front-line hospitals and let our front-line hospitals decide how best to provide health care in their communities.

If the Minister of Health would be prepared to do that, if he would just step back and realize that you can't cut before you've found the so-called efficiencies, you can't guarantee patient care will be there unless you've looked closely at how it can be delivered in a community, if he'll step back from that and put the \$1.3 billion back into hospital budgets, then he can take the time he needs to work with hospitals, to work with communities, to see if there's a restructuring that really would work and that doesn't sacrifice health care.

But that kind of planning takes time. You can't just send somebody in, one of your restructuring commissioners, to do the job fast. I know for a fact, an indisputable fact, that starting a restructuring process with a cut of \$1.3 billion is a guarantee of bad planning and a guarantee of a loss of health care service.

If this government is not going to cut health care in this budget after all, I know that it has time to put back into the budget the \$225 million that it's planning to take away from the elderly and the disabled. It's not too late to stop the new user fee and I surely don't think that anybody in this government has ever believed that it was conscionable to make, for example, psychiatric patients pay as much as \$40 a month for the drugs that they need just to function while this government gives \$14 million a day back to the well-to-do.

Maybe while it's at it, the government would take another look at the deregulation of drug prices, another of those Bill 26 pieces, one of those parts of Bill 26 which ironically could end up costing the government money, because the government has no guarantee of what will happen to drug prices when it deregulates, yet it was determined to forge ahead. Who could have any confidence in a government that cares only about ideology? They wouldn't even take the time to look at the evidence that deregulation could lead to significant increases in the cost of prescription drugs. The Minister of Health during that debate, I recall, still to my amazement, even suggested that people could go out and barter to get a better price for their drugs. I still contend that a parent of a sick child or somebody who's ill with a fever of 104 is not in a very good position to tromp around town trying to get the best prices they can for their drugs.

There is much more that this government is doing that it says is about the public interest and it's really just about cutting costs. The minister talked today about billing numbers, about the fact that they're not going to impose their billing numbers this year, they'll just keep the threat of imposing billing numbers for next year if somehow people don't respond to the big stick hanging over their head. But they're still talking about billing numbers, and they're still committed to government-imposed quotas on how many doctors can practise. That is not really about making sure that northern and rural communities have enough doctors, and that concern is reaching crisis proportions literally week by week.

The kinds of proposals in Bill 26, the big-stick proposals of this government, are really making the problems of recruitment and retention in northern and rural communities even more difficult. Graduates are telling us that they will leave the province of Ontario rather than being told where they can practise—47% of the medical

students in the University of Toronto have said they will leave the province rather than submit even to the threat of billing numbers.

What this government really wanted in Bill 26, and what they got in Bill 26, is the power to shut down physicians who are practising in oversupplied areas. That's one of the ways they see to cut OHIP costs, and that's really what this is all about. That's what this government cares most about: How do you cut costs?

Any positive incentive to meet the need of northern and rural communities for health care, like declaring Sudbury or Peterborough or Windsor underserved areas so they can have an incentive to attract physicians to their communities, is not even going to be considered by this government, is not high on the priority list. Expanding the northern residency program so that physicians will have training and will be encouraged to stay in northern Ontario communities, the most successful program supporting recruitment of physicians in the north that has ever been put in place, that's not on the priority list for this government either. The only things that are going to be on the priority list for this government will be the announcements that make the minister and the government look good.

I can acknowledge that as those announcements are made we will welcome them, because the need in health care is great. But I say cutting front-line service and putting new user fees in place is simply not the way to ensure that people in this province get good health care.

Taking the power to run the health care system while you refuse any responsibility for your decisions is dangerous. Keeping a pot of money for good-news announcements while you force hospitals to close their beds and lay off health care workers, increase the waiting times for emergency service and increase the waiting times for elective surgery, and reduce the numbers of intensive-care beds and the ability to care for pregnant mothers and newborn babies, jeopardizing the health of people of this province so you can keep a pot of money for good-news announcements, is just simply wrong. People will not get the health care they need when and where they need it.

Health care should be, as Mike Harris once said, "our first and most important commitment." It is frightening to know that this government can't be trusted to keep that commitment. It is frightening that the people in every community of this province will pay the price for that broken promise.

With that, we support non-confidence.

Mr Floyd Laughren (Nickel Belt): I intend to have a few remarks on the Liberal non-confidence motion, because I think it's an appropriate non-confidence motion and our caucus does intend to support this motion.

I find it ironic that yesterday was the end of the Canada assistance plan, as we've always known it in Canada, replaced by a health and services tax. That is linked, of course, to a reduction in transfer payments from Ottawa to the provinces. I would say to my Liberal friends in the Liberal caucus—and everybody who's in the Liberal caucus now I believe is a real, true Liberal—that what their federal cousins have done in Ottawa has really given licence to the provincial Tories to have their

way with health and social services in all the provinces, not just in Ontario. There's no question that what the federal Liberals are doing was certainly thought of a long time ago, when the Tories were in power, and the Liberals are now doing it. So there's no question that the provincial Liberals should be thinking about what the federal Liberals are doing to us at the same time.

1530

I would say that when it comes to the present government and its intentions with health care, it's been an interesting scene that has unfolded before us if you go back to a year ago when all of the promises were made—before that, as a matter of fact—in the Common Sense Revolution, but also in a large number of press releases that were put out by the Tories, who were then of course in opposition, assuring everyone there would be no cuts to health care.

Then when they formed the government and they realized they wanted to keep the promises that were in the Common Sense Revolution, they started hedging on their commitment and saying, "Oh, no, no, the \$17.4 billion that's being spent on health care in the province will be honoured"—not necessarily day by day, and I think most people understood that—but there was no commitment that even in any given year the \$17.4-billion commitment would be maintained, until the last couple of days.

The last couple of days we have the Minister of Health coming forward and saying, "No, no, that \$17.4 billion will be honoured year by year," which makes me wonder about some of the statements that were made. For example, just a few minutes ago the present Minister of Agriculture, sitting in his place and working away diligently on letters to the various chambers of commerce across the land, muttered or interjected that we had spent too much on health care.

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): Oh, no. You shut down 6,700 beds, is what I said.

Mr Laughren: That's sure what it sounded like to me, that the opposition, whether it was Liberals or NDP, had spent too much money on health care. Yet now they're not going to reduce spending on health care. You can't have it both ways.

I think that a lot of work was done, and without being too partisan about it, I think that more work was done in the last five years, in getting the increased costs of health care under control than had ever been done in this province. We understand in this caucus the need to control health care spending. We understand that.

We were the ones who set up the commission on hospital restructuring. We believe that needs to be done, and I have no problem with that. That does have to be done. We might have differences on the way in which it's implemented from time to time, but you have not heard us say that hospital restructuring is not necessary. And there needs to be a reinvestment from institutions into community-based care. I believe that all of us, and I suspect all three parties, believe that.

What's disturbing so far is that we have not seen any of that happen yet by the government. We haven't seen

any of that. All we've seen are cuts that are being announced in the hospital system before the restructuring has even been done, not after. These cuts are not a result, presumably, of hospital restructuring, because that restructuring has not occurred. So where are the savings coming from?

The government's own figures, from what's known as HTAP, the Hospital Training and Adjustment Panel in the Ministry of Health, announce that there will be somewhere between 20,000 and 26,000 jobs lost in the hospital sector in the next couple of years, with no apparent plan on the part of the government to engage in any kind of retraining or placement or counselling of those people. If they have these plans, they are nowhere to be seen.

I would say to the government members that it's fine for you to talk about reinvesting every cut you make, but we want to see some of those plans. If you're not going to put the hospital restructuring savings back into community-based care, what are you going to do with them? The Minister of Finance would probably love to have it go towards reducing the deficit, but I think the commitment that's now been made is that that won't happen, all those savings will be reinvested in the health care system. We have no idea when you're going to do that or how you're going to do that or where you're going to put it in the health care system, and I can tell you, we will be watching very carefully to see just how that happens.

We'll also be watching very carefully to make sure you don't play some kind of dishonest fiscal game by transferring responsibilities from other ministries into the Ministry of Health in order to keep that number up at \$17.4 billion. It would be possible to transfer programs from the Ministry of Education and Training, from corrections, from the women's directorate, for example, into the health care ministry's budget and say, "Eureka, we're back up at \$17.4 billion." Well, that would be too dishonest for words, and I wouldn't dare describe to you the names you would be called if you were to do that, because that's not what's meant by maintaining the health care budget at \$17.4 billion.

The other issue I'd like to talk about for a moment is the whole question of user fees. I can remember the Tories said a year ago now, on May 3, 1995, in a press release: "Mike Harris and his caucus publicly rejected new user fees as an effective way to ensure adequate funding for our health care system." May 3, 1995.

Jim Wilson, the Minister of Health—I know some of you will find it hard to believe that these particular words came from his particular lips, but this is what he said, a quote from him from Hansard, "Ask the seniors about \$150 million in new user fees." He was being critical of our government, and these are his exact words, "Don't take any more crap from politicians." That's what Jim Wilson said about user fees when he was speaking to the seniors of this province. That's in Hansard of July 26, 1993. He's got a lot of nerve, given what he's done since then, and I hope members opposite will appreciate the fact that he has spoken with a forked tongue in this regard.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: Hey, unparliamentary.

Mr Laughren: That's too bad.

When we talk about user fees, let me give you an example of what I'm talking about. If you're a single senior and your income is less than \$16,000 a year, each prescription will cost that single senior \$2—each prescription. If you're a single senior with an income of more than \$16,000—it could be just that much more—then there'll be a \$100 annual deductible, plus the dispensing fee. If you're a senior couple earning less than \$24,000, you'll have a \$2 prescription fee. If you're a senior couple earning more than \$24,000, there'll be a \$100 annual deductible, plus the dispensing fee for every prescription. And if you're a social assistance recipient, of course, the favourite target of this government, there's a \$2 prescription fee.

This is coming from a government that has stated over and over again that a copayment is a user fee, yet Jim Wilson, the minister, is on record as saying that they would never introduce user fees. Well, we've seen how firm that promise was.

There are some examples that one can use, because I know some people dismiss the \$2 fee and say, "Oh, well, what's \$2?" It can mean a lot to people who have to fill a lot of prescriptions.

People with mental health problems are given medication only for seven days—seven days in advance is my understanding—because of the concern, obviously, about overdosing for those folks. They would have to pay the \$2 user fee every seven days, and that's assuming they only had one prescription, one drug that they required a prescription for.

We hear stories such as an 86-year-old patient who still lives in her home, has congestive heart failure and diabetes, and takes 11 types of medications. By renewing her prescription every three months, she will be paying at least an additional \$22 for each renewal period: 11 prescriptions times \$2. For people who have very little income, that is a financial blow to them. The same of course could be applied to parents who have severely disabled children who would require a lot of prescriptions.

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For seniors and the disabled, there were promises. I quote again from the Common Sense Revolution, page 10, "Aid for seniors and the disabled will not be cut." How do you square that with user fees? On the technical argument that a user fee is not a cut in a program? I hope you wouldn't make that argument.

Then we have the Minister of Community and Social Services standing in his place this very day during question period and not dismissing the idea that there could be a change in the definition of "disability" in this province. Given the record of this government, if you change the definition of who is disabled in the province, we know who will get hurt by that; it will obviously be the disabled. Yet that's what the minister refused to stand in his place today and say: "No, we won't change the definition."

We've also heard that the government intends to cut \$30 million from the budget of services for developmentally handicapped people in the province. The story goes on and on.

Let's for the moment assume that the government is going to stick to its promise not to cut health care. That

means that there's \$17.4 billion out of the total Ontario budget, which is in the neighbourhood of \$50 billion. That's \$17 billion you have to take out of that because no cuts to health care, no cuts to classroom education, no cuts to policing, no cuts to agriculture and, I heard the Premier say one time, no cuts to support for tourism either.

What does that leave and what kind of cuts will there be in all those remaining programs? Take out the classrooms, take out health care, take out policing, take out agriculture and take out tourism. What have you got left to find all these savings that must go towards providing the tax cut? Where are you going to get that money?

You're going to be the laughingstock of this province. That's what you're going to be because you've taken away such a huge proportion of the base for potential cuts. You got yourself into this quagmire. Nobody else put you there; you put yourselves there. It's going to be very interesting to see how you're going to pay for that tax cut, somewhere between \$5 billion and \$6 billion a year; not the first year, because it's only 30%, but it's still a huge revenue loss.

Where do you make up that revenue loss? That's why I said a long time ago that if the Tories intend to deliver on their tax cut, they're going to have to take health care spending and apply it towards that cut in order to get the deficit down. Now they're saying no, they're not going to do that. I don't think the dollars are there. We'll see what happens, but I really believe that you've got yourself into a trap of your own setting by saying that you would not touch any of these other ministries, because you were in an election campaign. That's why you did it; it's very clear.

I can just imagine. You know, when you talk about not affecting the classroom, you're taking over \$400 million out this year; that'll annualize to \$1 billion a year. That's not going to touch the classrooms? Who are you kidding? Why are all the layoff notices going out by the school boards? Because you've cut that \$400 million out, that's why. It'll be \$1 billion when you annualize it over the next couple of years.

Then you look at agriculture and food. There's one we're going to be watching very, very closely, because the Premier was very, very firm that there would be no cuts to support for agriculture. Of course, there's already been \$26 million taken out, as I read the numbers, and there's going to be a lot more taken out as well.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: How much did you take out, Floyd?

Mr Laughren: We're not talking about what we did; we're talking about what the promise of the Tory government was on agriculture. I'm glad the Minister of Agriculture is sitting in his place. He's probably doing drafts of letters of apology to farmers across the province as he sits here listening to this debate, because none of us believe that there are not going to be any cuts in support for agriculture.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): There already have been.

Mr Laughren: We know there already have been. So why they think everything's so precious in the Common Sense Revolution when they've already broken all sorts

of promises in it, I don't understand. The Minister of Agriculture is going to be, if I could use the expression, eating crow in the next while on agriculture.

All of this to accomplish two things. This is what's causing them all the agony, basically two reasons: one is you made the promise in the Common Sense Revolution that you don't want the perception out there that this was just a document to get elected. You really want to be able to go to the people and say, "We brought forth the Common Sense Revolution and we're living up to the commitments that it contained therein." That's what you want to say. But people are laughing at you already on that promise, because they know you can't deliver on it. They just know that.

Secondly, do you really think that you could even start to get away with this 30% income tax cut, the only progressive tax there is in the province, without people associating it with classroom education and health care and support to agriculture and to policing? Of course people draw that link. They're not stupid. They understand that any discomfort, any unemployment and layoffs, cuts in programs, is to pay for that tax cut that you promised in the Common Sense Revolution.

I recall Mike Harris saying, "If we don't live up to all these promises, I'll resign, because I'm a different kind of politician." That's what he said. He said, "I'm a different kind of politician and if I don't live up to all these promises in the Common Sense Revolution, I'll resign, because I'm a different kind of politician." He is indeed a different kind of politician. I would go with him that far. He is a different kind of politician. But at the end of the day—

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): So are you.

Mr Laughren: Of course.

At the end of the day, he's already broken some of his promises and he's going to break a lot more of them, and guess what, folks? He's not going to resign. Then what's he going to say? He's going to say: "I was only kidding, folks. You don't really expect me to resign, simply because I promised I would, do you?" If you used that argument, he'd have to live up to all the promises in the Common Sense Revolution, and we know how stupid that would be.

So there you have the Premier, a different kind of politician, who said, "I will resign if I don't live up to every single promise in the Common Sense Revolution." You and I know he's already broken half of them in the Common Sense Revolution and before the next three years are up, he will have broken the rest of them in the Common Sense Revolution. So forget about it, folks, he's not going to resign, he's not a different kind of politician except that he still thinks that people out there are so stupid that they believe there's no link between the tax cut and all the cuts in programs. People are not stupid. People are not that stupid.

I can tell you that's exactly what people will say. They will say, "Wait a minute." I can see all the newsreels now, playing back Mr Harris's scrum in which he said: "I am different. I'm a different kind of politician and if I break any promises, I'll resign." I can see that playing back again and again and again on the newscasts, as he breaks promise after promise after promise, and the first one is health care.

I commend the Liberal caucus for bringing forth this resolution today and I'm quite happy to support it.

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Mrs Helen Johns (Huron): I am pleased to rise today and speak against this motion. I speak against this motion for one very important reason: The House has not lost its confidence in the government. The people of Ontario have not lost their confidence in the government, in Mike Harris or in Jim Wilson. In fact the people of Ontario elected us with a very clear mandate to do the things we said we were going to do in the Common Sense Revolution. One of those promises was to maintain the health care budget at \$17.4 billion by the end of our mandate, and I am proud to say that this promise will be another promise the people of Ontario will say this government has kept.

Not once, however, have we ever said that the status quo is acceptable. We promised the people of Ontario that we would find savings through the elimination of waste and duplication and reinvest them in front-line services, into services that the people of Ontario want and need, the services that Ontarians have told us they want.

We have already invested more than \$300 million back into front-line services. Some of these announcements include \$170 million back into community-based, front-line, patient-focused services for tens of thousands of people in Ontario. Long-term care is a growing demand in Ontario, and we are not only prepared to acknowledge this but we are prepared to finance this growth also.

In addition to putting our dollars where the growth is, we have also restructured the long-term-care area within the Ministry of Health to allow it to meet the needs of the people of Ontario, to allow it to grow with the changing demographics of Ontario.

In addition to the changes and the restructuring we have done to long-term care, we have also protected emergency room services in small, rural hospitals by introducing a \$70-per-hour payment for physicians, which acts as an incentive to provide coverage. For communities that historically have had difficulty in attracting and retaining physicians, this can add an incentive of up to \$60,000 per year for a physician who covers one shift in five. This initiative came as welcome news for hospitals that were at risk of losing their emergency room services and reinvests approximately \$13 million in small communities such as mine.

In my discussions with the hospitals in one of the small towns that I represent, I have found that there's been a substantial change in our emergency room services since we have implemented this \$70 change. Prior to the time of this change, the hospitals and the administration of the hospitals had a terrible time being able to find people to service the hospitals on weekends and at nights during the week. Since the time of this \$70 implementation, we have found that we now have the emergency room covered. This allows us to have people there so we know that the people in my riding have health care at all times. It also allows for long-term planning within the hospital system, something that we needed to have within rural Ontario.

Mrs McLeod speaks of good-news announcements. I speak of reinvestments in our health care system. We

have expanded kidney dialysis in Ontario. We have restored out-of-country coverage for Ontarians. We have introduced more MRIs to the province of Ontario. We have looked at patients with acquired brain injuries and brought them back to Ontario from where they were all across North America. We have brought defibrillation into ambulances in a number of areas. That allows us to stabilize people, because that hour after their emergency has occurred is a golden hour. We need to have defibrillators to allow that to happen.

We have talked about paramedics, and better training and more extensive training for paramedics. We have done extensive renovations or reallocations of dollars to allow ambulance service to expand in some areas of Ontario. We have looked at electronic data interchange and we have put money into eating disorder programs.

They talk about us cutting. What we're doing is reinvesting in the future of Ontario, helping people to have the health care system that they want and deserve in Ontario. We have reduced the waiting lists for heart surgery by increasing the amount of dollars Ontario spends on cardiac surgery. As stated in the throne speech, we have delivered on our commitment to provide school-age children with a second immunization that will virtually eliminate measles. Our list of reinvestments goes on and on and on.

The opposition would have you believe we've cut \$1.3 billion from the hospitals and that that's already occurred. This is simply not true. We've established, in consultation with the OHA, a three-year funding plan to reduce year-to-year fiscal uncertainties within the hospitals so they can plan effectively and efficiently. We've established targeted reductions so they know where they're going in the next three years to allow them to manage the system much better in both urban and rural areas.

We did not do as the Liberals promised in the red book: making promises without knowing how we were going to pay for them. We found the savings in the hospital system, in the health care dollars, and we've reallocated them to areas people in Ontario need and where the demand is.

Previous governments allowed 6,700 acute care beds to be cut in the past five years while leaving the existing infrastructure in place. They closed 6,700 beds in Ontario, but did they close any buildings? No, they didn't close a hospital in Ontario, and 6,700 beds are the equivalent of 30 medium-sized hospitals.

The two previous government also established district health councils. They asked the people in the local community to give them advice about how to change the hospital system in Ontario. As they prepared that advice, the previous governments neglected to provide them with the tools they needed to do the restructuring.

In the Savings and Restructuring Act which we have implemented since we came into office, we created the Health Services Restructuring Commission and charged it with the responsibility of implementing these restructuring projects. The commission will operate at arm's-length distance from government and will make sure these hospitals are restructured so they provide the best services for the people in their area. This will allow us to reallocate funds to the health areas that need them most.

The restructuring commission will be free of political interference and will have the legislative authority to move restructuring forward. The district health councils are responsible for receiving community input, and the commission is responsible for taking that input, those reports, and acting on them. If we say we're going to restructure hospitals, this government is going to move forward to have that happen.

In addition to restructuring, the Ontario Hospital Association asked the government to give it the necessary tools to restore good management in the Ontario hospital system. We have delivered. We have allowed hospitals additional means to raise revenues within the parameters of the Canada Health Act; this means they absolutely cannot charge for services deemed to be medically necessary. We have allowed them to establish crown foundations. We have set interest arbitration guidelines which instruct arbitrators to consider the employer's ability to pay. The list goes on and on.

All these items make Ontario a better place to live, a place where there is hope and opportunity.

If there is one thing the previous government did that I support, it was the introduction of the Trillium drug program. This program helps to cover high drug costs for people who are not covered under any other plan. The amount people pay is determined by their income. By becoming the last province to introduce copayments, we have allowed 140,000 working-class poor to become eligible for this program. Specifically, the new lowest net income used to calculate the deductible will fall from \$20,000 to \$6,500. As a result, the lowest deductible will fall from \$500 to \$350.

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Over the last 10 years, Ontario drug benefit program spending has tripled. Spending grew by an average of 16.4% annually from the early 1980s to 1993. We need to control these costs. We currently spend \$1.3 billion every year on our drug program. We all know that the demographics in Ontario are changing. Our population is getting older, and more people will receive assistance in a few years. We need to act now to ensure that the program is affordable and sustainable. The changes we have made will prepare the program for more recipients in the future and will allow us to add newly developed drugs to programs as they become available.

The NDP recognized that this program was going to be unsustainable unless they did something about it. What did they do? Rather than doing what the nine other provinces across Canada did, the NDP delisted drugs. They unilaterally denied seniors and others access to nearly 250 different drugs and drug products; there was 100% copayment.

As I mentioned earlier, the government knows that the status quo is not acceptable. We spend \$1 million more per hour than we receive in revenue. We currently spend almost \$9 billion in interest costs on the debt. That is more than we spend each year on our hospitals. That is more than we spend on our education program, which combines all schools and the college system.

If we maintain the status quo and the interest rate rises at the rate it has over the past five years, by the year 2000 we will be spending nearly \$20 billion in interest

alone on our debt. In that situation, we wouldn't be deciding what level of service to provide; we would be deciding what services to provide.

The people of Ontario have asked us to ensure that it will never come to that. Confidence is what they're giving us; that's what the people of Ontario have placed in us. We intend to deliver. We will deliver.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I appreciate the opportunity to speak today about health in Ontario. Let me start by speaking about the Health Services Restructuring Commission.

As the member across was talking about what the commission's aims might be, I thought I would mention to the House and to those who might be listening at home a speech that was written by and for Duncan Sinclair, the chair of this Health Services Restructuring Commission, and what he told an audience through his special adviser on Friday are items that the commission will not do. There are several, but the important one says, number 4, "Will not hold open hearings or otherwise promote opportunities for theatrics and delay."

I understood that our minister is on record as saying that he's listening to the people at local levels, that he wants to see exactly what they're going to do, but in fact what we recognize is that the commission will not hold open hearings. I guess it begs the question. They certainly have placed legislation in place to make unilateral decisions, not to listen to people who live in communities to see what it is that the communities truly need.

So I have to say at the outset I am very disappointed. I'm disappointed that they're going to take that tack and that the people in communities going through a process like the process that the people in Windsor-Sandwich went through in Essex county in terms of restructuring—it is indeed not a health service restructuring commission. It is a hospital restructuring commission, and there's a significant difference.

Years ago under a Liberal government, our health minister, Elinor Caplan, began the restructuring process, because governments from that day on recognized a significant need for change. Indeed, there isn't a political party that has ever advocated maintaining the status quo. But we recognize that in order to have true health service reconfiguration, you need to address all of the health area, not just hospitals. But what is happening here is that because of some erroneous tax cut that they must find funding for, they've taken significant hits to hospitals.

So what happens to hospitals and communities? What's happening is what we're seeing right across the province today, hospitals that can't cope with such a significant cut all in one fell swoop. And while it may be listed as an 18% cut—and that indeed is what it is, so while our members opposite want to say there are no cuts being made, hospitals are receiving letters from the ministry itemizing that their levels of payments and transfers are decreased. That is a cut. And there are no announcements—although the member opposite says they're going on and on and on, those announcements are nowhere near the total that is being cut currently from the hospital system. That is a fact.

Let me just say that my biggest question for the health minister is, what truly is his vision? Our understanding so

far is that the minister doesn't have a vision about where health service is going to be in five years or indeed where it should be in 10 years. Because clearly in the area of health you can't afford to simply have a four-year plan so that you can deliver something back to the electorate in hopes that they may put you back. Changes in health care need to be far more long-term than that.

So what is happening? An enormous hit that hospitals are taking, and can they withstand it? People who are working in hospitals today tell me that as long as funding for this kind of health service goes into one silo like a hospital, they cannot sustain those kinds of cuts year after year. Maybe the first year they'll find a way. Indeed, they are currently. They're laying off staff, period. But they won't be able to suffer through that the next year, and certainly not the year after that.

There are only two things that can happen in order for them to sustain the cuts. Either (a) they dump services—the hospitals will simply stop providing certain services, and we are seeing some evidence of that—or (b) they've got to count on the savings they're finding through restructuring processes. But the problem is that the restructuring is not truly health service restructuring. It's clearly only hospital restructuring. So when you're supposed to try to move services that hospitals need to dump, they've got to dump them to the less expensive community-based service delivery system, and currently the community-based services aren't being funded to the degree that they can offer the service.

The only thing that will happen in the end is that the service will not be provided, that you will have lineups, that you won't have people finding doctors. And those 18% to 25%: I suppose ironically that is likely the amount of savings that would be realized through a reconfiguration process, but this government has elected to take it out now. You can't take it out now and expect them to generate further savings. In order to do it on the time constraint that they've been given, they will simply dump their service. If any of you have people who have been through the hospital system today anywhere in Ontario, they will see instantly that it is a very different place from even only last year. The result, I'm submitting, will be disastrous.

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I look in my own community, when I see there are 30,000 to 40,000 people who currently cannot find a family physician. That is a significant part of primary care. That access point for individuals is a critical element in primary care. Are we going to wait the three or four years in hopes that this process will work so that these people can actually access a doctor? This is going on in Windsor, it's going on all over Essex county. It's going on in Alliston where the Minister of Health lives. It's going on in St Catharines. It's going on in most non-teaching centres across Ontario.

I guess even while we're going to go forward and close hospitals, this government is going to mete that out, 50% of hospital costs are overhead. So once you've shut down the hospitals, certainly you'd save the 50% that's attributed to the overhead costs, but the additional 50% that is actually service delivery, is actually the volume, where does that volume go? It goes somewhere. Does it

go to the remaining hospitals, which can't cope with it because they too are being cut and they're trying to dump and unload services? It can't go into the community-based agencies because they are not being funded currently to absorb it. We see that on the employment side and we see that on the health service side.

On the employment side, we have nurses being pink-slipped and they have nowhere in the community to be picked up because those agencies are not being funded to deliver the service. This speaks to a significant problem in planning, that indeed our Minister of Health has not planned well, has embarked on this process that will lead to disaster. I want to know that the Minister of Health has a vision, has a good vision, has our vision. It is not just a Liberal way of thinking, because the former government in the last term carried it on, so we knew that we were headed in the right direction.

I have to say that this government unfortunately is taking a huge step back, and it will be to the detriment of those who will require health services in Ontario.

Mr Wildman: I appreciate the opportunity to participate in this debate on the motion put forward by the Liberals for want of confidence in the Conservative government in this province.

I note that the motion says, "Whereas the Conservative government has clearly broken every single promise it made with respect to protecting health care," in the preamble. I find it rather interesting timing, recognizing that this motion was first tabled back in early December, that we are now debating the motion the day after the end of the Canada assistance plan. I think it's interesting that the Liberals would put forward this non-confidence motion when their cousins in Ottawa have cut transfer payments to the provinces.

Yesterday, the Canada health and social transfer came into effect. That means that not only will the cash transfers to the provinces be decreased significantly but it will reduce the federal government's ability to enforce any national standards for health and social services across the country. So while I am very concerned about the measures that this Conservative government is taking with regard to the direction of spending and health care in particular in this province, I am also very, very concerned about the fact that the federal Liberal government is making changes which will not only mean less money coming to the provinces, which the Conservatives then can use as a reason for making cuts and unfortunately going far beyond the cuts that the transfers are contemplating, but making it also very difficult for the federal government to enforce standards.

Frankly, the changes that we see with the Canada health and social transfer approach will mean that Conservative governments across Canada, including this government, will find it much easier to make draconian cuts to health care than they would have been able to make, despite what they wished to do, because the federal government will not have the clout it once had in this whole issue. That's unfortunate.

In 1996 the federal budget reconfirmed cuts of \$2.5 billion from the 1995-96 levels by the year 2001; federal Liberals are going to cut \$2.5 billion in transfers. The \$2.1 billion in cuts will start in 1997-98 from the 1995-96 base rate.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): What choice do we have?

Mr Wildman: There's a complex formula worked out that will make it more equal per capita funding, but all of this will be in place by the end of the decade. I'm afraid that because of these changes at the federal level we're going to see it far easier to do what the member for Carleton has just done and say, "What choice did we have?" Unfortunately, the federal government appears to be abdicating its role in terms of ensuring proper standards because it no longer has the financial clout, or won't have by the year 2000, and it's going to make it possible for this government to cut even more than the people of the province anticipate this government is going to.

I want to move specifically to this motion, and that is to deal with the health care spending of the Conservatives in Ontario. I note that in the campaign document of the Conservative Party it said on page 7: "We will not cut health care spending. It's far too important." The party, not then in power but now government, repeated this in a number of places in that document: on pages 2, 19 and 20.

So far the Conservative government has cut \$2 billion from health care spending over three years—at least it's announced that—the same amount that we've seen the federal government talking about for the whole country, \$2 billion just in this province, and yet we have the Premier get up in this House when asked a direct question about this—"Is this not a breaking of a promise?"—and give a one-word answer, "No." This is rather confusing. To say on the one hand, "It's too important. We won't cut health care spending," and then to announce a \$2-billion cut seems to be contradictory.

What does this mean in specifics? Of this, we see a \$1.3-billion cut to hospital funding which we know will lead to a loss of between 20,000 and 26,000 jobs in the hospital sector. We're going to see massive layoffs across the province because of the announced cuts the Minister of Health has informed the hospital boards they must make. Again, the Premier says this is not breaking a promise.

I'd like to deal with a couple of examples. In Sault Ste Marie, an area I'm very familiar with—I don't represent the city, but the area around the city is in my constituency, so I'm quite familiar with this. Over the last number of years the two hospitals in the city, the Plummer Memorial Public Hospital and the General Hospital, have been carrying out extensive discussions around restructuring to end duplication and save money and be more efficient. I must say that we were gratified that when we were in government these two hospitals didn't just continue discussing; they actually did merge their administrative operations and they looked at the roles of each hospital and made decisions that would avoid duplication where they would cooperate, they would work together. As a matter of fact, the two boards meet as one federated board now. They work together and they have one administration, and this is saving costs. So we have here two hospitals that have followed the advice of successive governments that we must have restructuring.

These two hospitals now have been informed by the Minister of Health that they have to cut 4% this year and that there will be additional cuts in the two subsequent years, yet the Premier says the government has not broken its promise not to cut health care. Well, if the government has not broken that promise, why is it the minister sent out a directive to these hospitals saying, "Cut 4% this year, and there are going to be additional cuts in the two subsequent years"?

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We hear from the Conservative members, "Well, we are going to reinvest the savings." It is true that they have reinvested and will, I guess, reinvest some of the savings in other services that are needed in the province, but so far the reinvestments have not nearly equalled the cuts. There is a deficit in that regard. How we will calculate the total I don't know, because they keep saying, "There's more coming, there's more coming." We'll see. We haven't seen \$1.3 billion reinvested, and that's what the hospitals have been told they have to cut.

Also, the government hasn't really said very much about the layoffs that are going to occur because of these required cuts by the hospitals across the province.

It hasn't just been hospitals that have seen cuts. We've seen the home oxygen program cut, \$10 million; the assistive devices/hearing aid program cut, \$5 million—this despite another promise of the government that they weren't going to hurt disabled people—anti-smoking community grants, a preventive health program, a \$1-million cut; community mental health programs—again, community-based programs which are cheaper than institutional programs—cut, \$4 million; birthing centres and other new programs cut, \$1.7 million; and the Premier's health innovation fund for research grants cut, \$7 million. All of these cuts, yet we have the Premier get up in this House and say that they have not broken their promise not to cut health care funding.

We've even had the Minister of Health say in this House and elsewhere that the funding envelope—that's the term he uses—for health care is sealed. Well, it's a pretty loose seal; either that or there must be some holes in the envelope, because all of these funds have slipped out somehow and have disappeared.

Frankly, what I suspect is going to happen is that the government is going to continue its cuts in other areas, such as education, despite the promise they made not to cut classroom funding, classroom education, and they're going to continue the cuts to the vulnerable in social services, and then they're going to use some of those moneys to put back into the health care program. I suspect that's what they're going to do.

I was told once by a man wiser than I that I shouldn't subscribe to the conspiracy theory of politics, that rather, the other theory of politics is far more applicable, that is, the mess-up theory. There are only those two theories of politics. I'm not sure whether I shouldn't consider the conspiracy theory in this case, because they sure are messing up and I think they're doing it intentionally.

What else have we seen here? Despite their promise not to harm seniors, we've seen the Ontario drug benefit plan user fees which will start on June 1, which will mean that social assistance recipients and seniors whose

annual income is less than \$16,000 will pay a \$2 user fee for every prescription.

Again, in my view, this is a direct contradiction. As a matter of fact, I recall on November 30, 1995, Mike Harris said in this House: "I've been calling for a full and open discussion of the issue of user fees. Let's be fair: A copayment is a user fee. Rationing leads to user fees. Parental contribution is a user fee." He was opposed to user fees, and yet he says he isn't breaking any of his promises or commitments.

What they've done here with the drug benefit plan is simply bring in a user fee to help pay for the fact that they've restored the out-of-country limit to the \$400. So the well-off seniors who can afford to have two homes and spend time in Florida every winter are getting a bigger chunk, and all of the other seniors who don't have very much money are having to pay a user fee for their drugs. This despite the fact that on page 10 of their document they said, "Aid for seniors and the disabled will not be cut."

I support this motion because I don't have confidence that this government is going to keep its promises. I've seen too many of them broken already, despite what the Premier has to say in a one-word answer, that "No," he has not broken promises.

The Premier said that if he broke any of his promises, he would resign. I put as much credence in that promise as I do in all of the other promises, because he hasn't kept them so there's no point in expecting that he might keep this one.

We see the cutting of a very important program that has been used by Canadians to define themselves, and this government is going to cut more. That's why I don't have confidence in the government, and I regret the fact that the Liberals in Ottawa are assisting this government to decimate the health care system with their changes at that level.

Mr Bert Johnson (Perth): I rise in the House to debate the motion by the official opposition of want of confidence in the government with respect to protecting health care. I appreciate the opportunity to address this motion, and as this will be my first official speech in the House, I would ask for your indulgence as I take a moment to talk about the great riding of Perth.

The riding of Perth consists of the geographic boundaries of the county Perth with the additions of the separated city of Stratford and the separated town of St Marys. Our southern boundary starts at Prospect Hill just a few miles north of London in the heart of southwestern Ontario. It stretches for over 50 miles north to Teviotdale. For anyone who doesn't know where Teviotdale is, it's halfway between Treecastle and Kenilworth.

It's in the heart of Ontario and covers an area of 541,000 acres, 439,000 acres of which is improved farm land. The total population of the riding is 67,000: 11,000 live on farms; 15,000 live in small, rural, built-up areas; and 41,000 live in urban settings like Stratford, Listowel, St Marys, Mitchell and Milverton.

As these statistics show, the riding is a distinct blend of rural and urban and is renowned for its diverse contributions to the province in the form of produce, livestock, industrial goods and cultural experiences as

well as taxes. It's common knowledge that we contribute far more to the provincial treasury than we receive back in services.

For Perth county, agricultural activities represent not only a community and social structure but a strong economic base as well. Perth county, in relation to other counties in Ontario, ranks first in dairy cattle numbers, with nearly 50,000 head, which accounts for 7% of total provincial stocks; second in milk quantity, accounting for almost 7% of the milk produced in Ontario, some 165 million litres; first in total hogs and first in hogs marketed with nearly 390,000 head, or 12.5% of Ontario stock. It also ranks second in white bean acreage and second in mixed grain acreage.

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In addition to being at the top productionwise, Perth county also reaches new heights in terms of planning for the future. Not long ago, members of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Christian Farmers Federation, the pork producers, the cattlemen's association, the milk committee, egg producers and broiler producers formed the Perth County Agricultural Committee and are soon publishing their report, which will revolutionize the standards of agriculture practice in Ontario with regard to noise, dust and odour, as well as manure management. Through increased productivity and new policy development, these outstanding members of the riding have made Perth stand out in many people's minds as a progressive agricultural community.

But Perth county, as I have said before, is diverse and provides numerous commodities to Ontario. In addition to its many agricultural contributions, Perth has its share of industrial giants as well. Its manufacturing industries include names such as Cadbury, Crane, Samsonite, Canadian Fabricated Products, FAG Bearings, Allied-Signal Automotive, Beaulieu carpets, Hayes-Dana, Stacey's, Campbell Soup and Spinrite.

In the last year, Spinrite Yarns of Listowel, for instance, has expanded its production line to become the largest North American supplier of 100% cotton yarn products.

Ray Finnie, the president of FAG Bearings Ltd in Stratford, put it best when he stated: "The involvement, dedication and commitment of our people has made it possible for us to compete in world markets. Our recently completed expansion will ensure continued growth and success in the future."

Paul Jesson, the vice-president and general manager of Beaulieu of Canada Inc, also summed up the principle of why Perth is such an industrial success when he said: "One of the reasons that Beaulieu has done so well is that we're here in Stratford. We have a very good workforce."

Quite simply put: "The people [of Perth] are industrious, dedicated, and reliable. They believe in an honest day's work for an honest day's pay. Their values deliver big-league success." This description was offered by Wayne Bondi, vice-president, Allied-Signal Automotive. Agriculturally and industrially, Perth county is distinct from any other riding in Ontario, but the dynamic nature of this riding does not end in the workplace. Perth county has much more to offer.

Culturally, the county of Perth is at the top. In addition to a number of galleries and museums, Perth is the home

of the world-renowned Stratford Shakespearean Festival. A must-attend event, the Stratford Festival is one of those fantastic events which enrich the quality of life at the same time as they improve the province's economy. In a season which extends from May to mid-November, the Stratford Shakespearean Festival employs over 750 people, attracts nearly 450,000 theatre-goers annually, and is responsible for contributing over \$100 million each year to the local economy. The festival averages about 500 performances a year of at least 10 different productions. There is little excuse for not attending at least one show, and I can assure you that I will be here reminding the members of the Legislature about this fine attraction in the months to come.

You can see now why I say that Perth county, in the heart of southwestern Ontario, is distinct from other ridings. I am proud of the riding and of the unique qualities that are found in the people of Perth.

Community spirit is the soul of any region, and Perth county has plenty of soul. Community organizations such as the Kinsmen, Rotarian, Lions and Optimist clubs provide volunteer services which enrich the lives of many. The charity work they do provides help for others and strengthens community spirit.

A perfect example of community spirit at work can be found in the Perth county 4-H clubs. In total, 817 youngsters of Perth participated in the 4-H program last year, and 165 leaders volunteered their time towards the activities as well. As a one-time member of the Maryborough 4-H, I know the strong values and work ethic taught in this program are part of what makes Ontario great.

Another example of the community spirit of Perth can be found in the announcement which I made in the Legislature yesterday: the congregation of Ontario Street Baptist Church in Stratford working together to build an accessibility ramp. These people donated their time and their money to see this important structure built without any government involvement.

Whether rural or urban, the people in the riding of Perth know how to care for their neighbours and work together to build prosperous communities which are the envy of many.

How, you might ask, does one keep track of all this activity? Four local newspapers provide written updates of events and happenings within the riding and around the world. The Stratford Beacon-Herald, one of only two independent dailies in the province, publishes coverage of the riding of Perth, while the St Marys Journal-Argus, the Mitchell Advocate and the Listowel Banner provide weekly reporting of many events which occur in and around Perth county. In addition, station CJCS provides radio coverage out of Stratford. Local television surrounds us, with CKNX in Wingham, CKCO in Kitchener and CFPL in London.

There you have it, a brief insight into the heart of southwestern Ontario, county Perth.

I would like to thank you, members of the Legislature, for allowing me the time to indulge in one of my favourite topics, the riding of Perth. I feel privileged and honoured to represent such fine people. For those of you who are curious, I leave an open invitation to visit one of

the most interesting, beautiful and intriguing areas of Ontario. Take the time to see the sights and meet the people and you will never want to call any other place home.

I would like to convey to everyone here that I will not be supporting the motion. In fact, I'll be using all my efforts, as much as I can, to make sure it's defeated.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): On a point of order, Madam Chair: Normally, when members give their maiden speech, there are two-minute replies and we have the opportunity to comment.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): I'm afraid that isn't a point of order. You don't have that opportunity in this debate.

Mr Crozier: It would be nice if we could say that we do compliment the member on his speech today.

The Acting Speaker: Thank you for that. That is not a point of order.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Let me also congratulate the member for Perth, our Deputy Speaker, because it's always nice to hear about Perth county, particularly the Stratford Festival, which I'm sure many of us have enjoyed over the years. It also allowed us on this day not to hear any more nonsense about, "No cuts in health care." Any time you want to give another speech like that, rather than taking up our time with the nonsense the government usually preaches for these prepared times, go ahead, the member for Perth.

It's always nice to start at the beginning. I notice that a number of the members have already mentioned this, but I think we should go back again to the promises your party made in the Common Sense Revolution. Let's just read them once again just so that everybody in Ontario and everybody in the House is familiar with them.

"We will not cut health care spending. It's far too important. And frankly, as we all get older, we are going to need it more and more.

"Under this plan, health care spending will be guaranteed.

"Every dollar we save by cutting overhead or by bringing in the best new management techniques and thinking, will be reinvested in health care to improve services to patients."

We certainly haven't seen that so far, and I'm going to give you some examples of that fairly soon.

"Health care, law enforcement and classroom funding won't be touched," and in one more place in the Non-Sense Revolution, "A 20% cut in non-priority government spending, without touching the health care budget."

Three times there are statements that health care will not be cut.

We all saw the charade that we went through last fall, when at one time there was some debate as to whether or not we were actually spending \$17.8 billion or \$17.4 billion, and it was finally agreed that it was \$17.4 billion. That was the amount that was made when you gave your commitment.

Then we heard a very interesting statement, you may recall, from the parliamentary assistant to the minister, who actually said in this House, "Well, as long as we're back to \$17.4 billion in the year 2000"—at the end of the term—"then we've lived up to our commitment." In

other words, the \$1.3-billion cut that's taking place right now—and that's what it is according to your own economic statement—doesn't really count at all. Well, I say, balderdash; that's not correct. In your statement you said you were not going to cut health care spending, so don't cut it even for one year.

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I come from a community, Mr Speaker, like you, that's very renowned in this province, and one of the things we pride ourselves on in Kingston and The Islands is the tremendous health sciences centre that we have there. As a matter of fact, it's so efficiently run that the person who's been involved in that has now been—I don't agree with the way you're going about it in Bill 26, but at least you've appointed an individual in Duncan Sinclair who is renowned in his field. He was a former neighbour of mine, and certainly if anybody can make any kind of sense out of the mess that you put yourself and the province in, he is the man to do it. I certainly wish him well in that regard. That's about the only thing—

Mr Murdoch: You forgot about those three years when Peterson had the province.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr Bert Johnson): The member for Grey-Owen Sound, come to order.

Mr Gerretsen:—that I've agreed with you on so far.

What's very interesting is that one of the reasons why so many people retire to the community that I represent is the kind of lifestyle that we enjoy in Kingston. One other reason why so many people retire to my area is the tremendous health care facilities that are in our community right now. As a matter of fact, I think that we still are the second most popular place to which people retire in all of Canada.

Mr Crozier: Next to Essex South.

Mr Gerretsen: No, no, next to Victoria. One of the reasons that I used to hear and I'm still hearing for why people come to the Kingston area is because of the tremendous facilities that are available there.

Now let's just take a look at the so-called non-cuts that you've made to the Kingston area just within the last two or three weeks. Kingston General Hospital: a \$5.7-million reduction in provincial funding, 122 layoffs of unionized workers and 25 managers. Some of these people will be rehired, I agree, but they will be rehired at a much lower pay scale or on a part-time basis.

It's interesting to note some of the comments that people have made about that. I'm quoting right from the Whig-Standard of March 22, 1996: "It's a mood that could persist for months as Kingston General, seeking to absorb \$5.7 million in provincial funding cuts, embarks on a complicated job shuffle that will disrupt the lives and paycheques of nearly 150 employees."

The next item: a \$280,000 cut in the Kingston Regional Cancer Centre. The patients there had to go to the ultimate extreme, and I'm again reporting from a newspaper clipping of March 29, 1996, where they actually had to go marching along King Street with 20 to 30 other patients and staff to show their concerns, ranging from "the loss of nurses and treatment to the decision to close the kitchen and dining room in the lodge used by patients who have to stay over because of their treatment. Management has proposed that patients use the hospital cafeteria or city restaurants."

A radiation therapist in the regional cancer centre has said that "impending staff cuts will damage patient care. At least 18 staff members will be affected, including eight of the centre's nurses.... The impact of the provincial and federal cuts on the centre are not known, Scott says, but the Kingston Regional Cancer Centre is trying to cut \$280,000 in salaries." The cuts will eventually lead to and create longer waiting periods.

I can go on, with cuts that are taking place at the Hotel Dieu Hospital of \$3.1 million that will lead to the loss of some 74 jobs. Again, a statement by one of the nurses there is, "Our primary responsibility is to the patient," and she has grave concerns about the quality of care at the hospital in light of the layoffs.

Finally, I just want to talk about the long-term-care cuts. We heard the member talk earlier about how they want to do away with the fiscal uncertainties that currently exist in the health care system. Those fiscal uncertainties right now have caused, without any warning whatsoever, a cut in the funding to the Rideaucrest Home for the aged in Kingston of some \$839,000; a cut in the funding to Fairmount Home in Glenburnie, which is represented by the member for Frontenac-Addington, of \$484,000; a cut to Providence Manor in Kingston of \$359,348. It certainly doesn't seem to me that this creates fiscal certainty for those institutions when they have been cut like that just within the last two or three weeks.

I will be supporting this motion. The cuts are affecting the institutions right now, affecting the patients in those institutions, affecting the residents of the long-term-care facilities and affecting the people employed there and the morale in those institutions. I say shame on you, government. Put the funding back in there immediately, as you promised in your so-called Common Sense Revolution.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): Mr Speaker, I would also like to congratulate you on your first speech in the Legislature. It is a tradition that we all acknowledge the importance of that occasion, and I certainly do so with you. I must tell you, given the nature of this debate, I would have hoped that one of the things you would talk about was health care within the county of Perth, because I'm sure the people in Perth county have as deep a concern as all other citizens in the province about the nature and the status of health care.

One of the real issues for people in Ontario is whether the government has kept its promises around health care. There is no doubt on the part of any of us in this Legislature but that the promise we heard again and again from the now Minister of Health and from the now Premier throughout the election period and indeed for some months before coloured the results of that election quite substantially.

It's important for us to acknowledge and to be very clear that our party, while we were in government and since we've been in government, has supported the Conservative viewpoint that we need to make some changes, that we need to restructure substantially within the health care system. Indeed we began a lot of that process during our term of office, trying to help both the hospitals and community health providers look at the whole nature of health care in a different way.

Earlier today when my colleague the member for Nickel Belt was speaking, the Minister of Agriculture,

Food and Rural Affairs, for example, was talking about the fact that during our term of office 6,900 beds were closed in the province. He's right. That was true. That was done because there was a general acknowledgement within the health care system that measuring how our health care system is working by the number of beds is no longer appropriate given the changes in technology, given the change in process of health care.

In fact, the previous Liberal government and our government under our Premier's council on health had heard from experts like Professor Duncan Sinclair, now the head of the hospital restructuring committee, about the need to look at health care in a different way, the need to change our focus from the number of hospital beds available in a community to the nature and status of health within our communities, that what we needed to do was to pay attention to the determinants of health, what we needed to do was provide supports in nutrition, in assistive devices, in community health programs, home care, all those ways in which we can help people to maintain their health within their homes.

The evidence is overwhelming that when we talk about a health care system as consisting only of hospital beds, we are talking about an illness system. When we are talking about health care as a system which provides an assurance that those possibilities for the maintenance of health and the prevention of disease will be available to all of us, whatever our age or level of ability, that is when we will attain a fine health care system in our province.

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Health care involves far more than the care of illness. It involves the prevention of disease. It involves the protection of those who are citizens of the province from such things as malnutrition—a real problem in this province given the drop in funds now available to the very poorest to afford the food they need to keep themselves healthy. It also involves the ability of people to get those drugs which prevent them from being ill, things like medicines that ease the pain of arthritic conditions, things like insulin, things like vitamins and minerals and special supplements with which, if they have them, many people are able to maintain their health for much longer.

One of our concerns when we talk about the issue of dollars coming out of the health care system is that that is on top of the dollars that have come out of the pockets of those who are most vulnerable to ill health in this province: children, the poor, the disabled and the elderly, all of whom are disproportionate consumers of health care dollars within our province because they are among the most vulnerable to health problems.

In addition to the kinds of cuts that have been made, as my colleague from Algoma talked about, the \$10 million from the home oxygen program, cuts to the assistive devices/hearing aid program, to anti-smoking grants, to community mental health programs—all of these focused on our ability to maintain and preserve health, and we get very concerned. But on top of that, the changes under Bill 26 that now charge user fees really create an additional problem. We need to talk about what that really means to someone who is a senior, to someone who is on social assistance.

It may not seem like much to have to pay a \$2 fee for a prescription, but let me tell you, I have a child who is a chronic asthmatic and has been all her life. We have never had a month in our family since she was born when our prescriptions did not add up to at least seven and when we did not have a combined cost of over \$150 for those. Now, we're fortunate; my husband and I have both been fortunate enough to be employed and to have a health program that could support that. But if I think of all the \$2 fees for those seven prescriptions each month, 12 months a year for 25 years, I know we're talking about a lot of money for a family. I have had constituents with asthmatic children, because they know I have one, come to my office and say to me: "I can't afford the medication. I'm going to have to take a chance. I can't afford the Ventolin my child needs until the 31st of the month when my cheque comes in."

We are going to have disasters in this province if people cannot afford the user fee they now have to pay for their prescription when they need it. Doctors are going to have to change the way they treat their patients because they're going to have to recognize that many patients, however much they want to, will not be able to follow their instructions. That is particularly true of children, the elderly and the disabled, all of whom have, in many cases, multiple prescriptions, prescriptions which allow them to remain healthy.

If we think about the disabled in our province and the kind of medications they often require, we see medications that maintain their ability to breathe, because many of them have respiratory problems because of the nature of their disabilities. Certainly many seniors who have emphysema, who have had lung cancer, who have chronic obstructive lung diseases of one sort or another are in that category.

Then we have those people who are mobility-impaired, who very often have difficulty with their whole ability to take in and eliminate food. Again, the kinds of prescriptions that are required to prevent infection and to enable them to function normally—as normally as they are able—cost money every month.

We also know that we have a huge issue around the misuse of drugs, particularly among the elderly. For that reason, the medical establishment, together with the government, knows that if we allow people to have a very large number of pills at a time, that may not be in their best interests; it may cause overmedication. Certainly for many mental health problems, it is not possible to get a prescription that lasts any longer than seven days, even though that person may chronically require that medication for the rest of their lives. So every time that medication has to be renewed in order to protect from overdose, there will be a fee.

All of the literature on seniors tells us how much it costs us when seniors overdose on their drugs, that they have confusion about the number of pills they take and that this is a very serious problem. So the decision was made that seniors should only be supplied on a one-month basis. That may have been increased, I understand, to a three-month basis by some physicians who simply understand that their patients will not take medication if they can't afford it. But what we then have is a situation

that compounds the danger. The estimated cost to us of overdosing, particularly by seniors, is very high. So we have a situation where, to try and correct one problem, we are laying up trouble for ourselves in another area.

One of the issues that we have to face here is that we have a government that said very clearly in an election that there would be no additional health care costs. We have a Premier who, in very, very strong terms in November 1995, said here: "I've been calling for a full and an open discussion on the issue of user fees. Let's be fair. A copayment is a user fee. Rationing leads to user fees. Parental contribution is a user fee."

Let's be very clear: Having gone through an election where Mike Harris and his caucus—this is a quote from a publicity release in May 1995—"rejected new user fees as an effective way to ensure adequate funding for our health care system," what happened between May and November? What happened between the promise and the breaking of it with the introduction of Bill 26 and the introduction of user fees within this province?

I will be supporting the Liberal non-confidence motion even though I feel conflicted, because as a member of the former government I know that many of the requirements we have to deal with costs within our health care system come because the transfer payments for established programs have been cut by the federal Liberals. It's very clear that the passing on of that decision, originally made by the Conservatives under Mulroney and now maintained by the Liberals under Chrétien, is putting any provincial government under very, very serious difficulties in providing health care.

But even though that is true and even though that was true, and the Conservatives knew that was true at the time they made their promise not to cut one cent from health care, not to institute user fees, what they promised the people of Ontario they have not kept. They knew that the federal Liberals were reducing transfer payments and they still made that promise; that is the point. How can we have any confidence in a government that has run in an election, has again and again repeated its promise around the sanctity of health care services to the citizens of Ontario, and not act when we see it break that promise?

We will be supporting the Liberal non-confidence motion and I'm quite confident that the people of Ontario will also vote non-confidence the next time they have an opportunity.

1700

Mr Tony Clement (Brampton South): As the member for Brampton South, it's my privilege—and duty, I guess—to speak against the motion of non-confidence as submitted by the Liberal Party of Ontario.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): You surprise me; I thought you were a free-thinker.

Mr Clement: I know that comes as a bit of a surprise to honourable members opposite, but I am going to use my time to try to talk about the reasons why I think this motion should not be supported by members in this assembly and by persons who are watching on television or who hear about it through the media.

I think the first place to start is going back to the source, and the source for members of this government—not as something etched in stone that came from on high,

but as a touchstone that we use to measure ourselves, to see whether we are accomplishing what we promised to do—for us, as we all know, has been the Common Sense Revolution, a document that was issued one year before the election as an attempt—I think an honest attempt—by a political party to have an honest dialogue with the people of Ontario, not politicians to politicians in the Legislature, but to have a dialogue with the people of Ontario to put our views out in public a full year before the provincial election.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): So he said he wouldn't cut health care.

Mr Clement: I'm quite happy the honourable member mentioned a particular segment of the Common Sense Revolution and I'd like to quote that segment in full. That is perhaps what the people of Ontario want to hear, what the document that I ran on actually said. I distributed 25,000 copies in my own riding; we distributed over 2.5 million of them province-wide. Let's go back to the source. I challenge the honourable members to read along. Please don't let your lips move when you do so, but let's read along.

Page 7: "Health Care: We will not cut health care spending." We said that. "It's far too important. And frankly, as we get older, we are going to need it more and more." That's the part that the honourable members like to quote. Let me perhaps read on and complete the paragraph:

"Under this plan, health care spending will be guaranteed. As government, we will be aggressive about rooting out waste, abuse, health card fraud, mismanagement and duplication." Not the status quo, but rooting out waste, abuse, health card fraud, mismanagement and duplication.

"Every dollar we save"—which presupposes we're going to save some money by rearranging the priorities—"by cutting overhead or by bringing in the best new management techniques in thinking, will be reinvested in health care to improve services to patients. We call this commonsense approach, 'patient-based budgeting.'"

There, for the people of Ontario who are watching this debate, is what the Common Sense Revolution actually said. I stand by it. Minister Wilson stands by it. The Premier stands by it. There are 82 caucus members on this side of the House who are proud to stand by the Common Sense Revolution.

That is the context of where we are. The underlying point of that context, if I may be so bold, is that the status quo that the honourable members opposite are so wedded to, feel so emotional about, was not working. It was not working in policing, it was not working in education, it was not working in social assistance and it most certainly was not working in the provision of quality health care services to those who needed them. That was the problem with the status quo, the problem that gave us longer lines for elective and in some cases very much needed surgery.

I have constituents in my riding of Brampton South who are in agony right now waiting for hand surgery, six-month waits. That didn't just start on June 8. That is something they are living with every day. Those queues were there. Delisting of drugs was there before we came along. Delisting of drugs for senior citizens and those

who need help in coping with everyday life, that was there. Not the right equipment. I just came back from visiting some friends in North Carolina, which, yes, is in the United States of America: 11 magnetic resonance imaging units in one city alone. I think anyone in Ontario would love to have a city that had 11 MRIs. We have perhaps 12 in all of Ontario.

That is the status quo that we were living with. We have heard today, as we hear every day, how there are communities in Ontario that do not have access to a general practitioner or perhaps an obstetrician or some other specialist. That is the reality of the status quo of health care in Ontario. We have heard, when we had committee hearings on Bill 26, how people were afraid that somehow our changes meant a two-tiered health care system. I would say to them and I would say to the honourable members opposite that we do have a two-tiered health care system now. When doctors are not available in rural communities, in northern communities, that is a two-tiered health care system. That is the status quo that has to be changed.

What we wanted to do was to change that status quo. No one said it was going to be easy, no one said that the answers would flow quickly and easily as part of the government agenda, but it had to be started. The people of Ontario were demanding a start to those changes. Indeed, as we heard on the Bill 26 hearings, the hospitals, perhaps at the front line of the restructuring, as we know, with the restructuring commission, were the ones coming to us and saying: "We can't do it ourselves. We know that there are savings that have to be done. We know that we have 6,700 hospital beds and yet we still pay for the heat, we still pay for the light, we still pay for the administration. We know that has to change, but we cannot do it ourselves. We need your help as legislators." That is what we are doing through the hospital restructuring commission.

Let me reiterate what the honourable member from Huron said earlier. There are some changes to the spending in health care, no doubt about it. But there are reinvestments going on, reinvestments to health care in the areas that are needed, and Lord knows we know that that money is needed in the health care system, reinvestments of over \$300 million thus far, even more than the \$132 million announced last July, and more will be coming.

As we learned last week, \$170 million on the front line for community-based long-term care—that is an investment in an area that was crying for new investment in this area; restoring out-of-country coverage for those who have paid into the system; expanding kidney dialysis, an area that is so necessary, and indeed Brampton was the recipient of part of those increased services; sessional fees, a \$70-an-hour sessional fee increase; emergency room services protected; small rural hospitals protected; cardiac surgery reinvestment, reducing the waiting list for heart surgery; expansion, and this is something I'm particularly proud of, of the Trillium drug program for those who are the working poor so that 140,000 of them, 140,000 working-poor Ontarians who did not have coverage before now, have coverage through our changes to the Trillium drug program; paramedic training, \$15.5 million in that area; expanded emergency services. The

list goes on and on, well over \$300 million in reinvestment thus far.

That is the commitment of this government. It is a commitment to redo the system in a way so it meets the needs and the demands that the citizens of Ontario quite rightly have of the system. They're paying into it. They have the right to demand quality health care. That is not what they were getting.

1710

Let me speak in the time I have left to some of the concerns of the members opposite. Perhaps I can allay some of their concerns—

Mr Crozier: I doubt it.

Mr Clement: I'll try anyway—concerning the way we are seeking to consult with the people of Ontario, particularly about hospital and health care services restructuring.

Mr Bradley: Behind closed doors.

Mr Clement: Not at all. The honourable member said, "Behind closed doors." As the honourable member knows, by statute still in place, district health councils, with an ability and a mandate to represent the communities in their catchment area, are the ones that do public hearings; they are the ones that represent their communities. We have had a commitment from the Minister of Health, over and above the legislative commitment which is already there and continues to be there even after Bill 26, to listen to the district health councils and to other parties within the community when we do the restructuring that so very much has to be done.

I leave the honourable members opposite and those who are watching on television with this: The issue for us is not a question of status quo versus change. Perhaps some of us would have wished that was the case, but the status quo did not exist any more. The status quo was a deteriorating status quo, which meant that the provision of health care services available to those in need was deteriorating at a rate that was truly gargantuan. I and my colleagues can hold our heads high—I hope they can still say this; I have confidence that they can—knowing that the changes we are implementing—no one said they were going to be easy, no one said every single move the government made was going to be a popular move, but people are saying the changes have to be done. They are necessary because the status quo was not working, and it was working at less and less of a rate.

These changes will allow us to have a health care system we can justly be proud of, a health care system which is the envy of the world, a health care system that allows Ontario again to be the land of hope, opportunity, jobs and prosperity that we on the government side know we are capable of. I say let's get on to it.

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I rise to speak in support of our motion as it relates to this government's inability to keep what I think was fundamentally their key promise. We've talked about it so much in the House before. It's one of my favourite quotes from the Non-Sense Revolution: "It's all in the book. It's in the plan. We say very clearly, health care spending is a priority. Not one cent will be cut from health care spending." I have a sign that I keep in my office in Hamilton and that I keep in my office here at Queen's Park to remind me every day of the betrayal your government has imposed upon the people of Ontario.

My honourable friend across the floor speaks about these cuts, that these cuts really haven't happened, that there are no cuts in health care. Let me remind you of a couple of points.

In my own community, \$14.6 million was cut out of the Hamilton Civic Hospitals—I'm sure they're just imagining that somehow that's not real—and potentially 400 job losses at the same hospitals. You know what? Probably they're imagining. Those 400 employees who are going to lose their jobs as a result of your cuts are imagining. I'll tell them tomorrow that the government said it's not happening, that they're not going to lose their jobs. Those 400 employees at the Civic and Henderson hospitals in Hamilton can feel safe tonight because the government members have said there are no health care cuts. But they're still going to get their pink slips; they're still going to get laid off.

St Joseph's Hospital in Hamilton: \$7 million, potentially 190 employees, recommended for closure by the health care task force in Hamilton. I am sure that the tens of thousands of Hamiltonians who have sent letters and petitions in favour of keeping St Joseph's Hospital open are sitting there, imagining that you've cut health care spending, and it hasn't happened. If that hospital closes, it's probably just another figment of their imagination. It really hasn't happened, because this government wasn't going to cut health care spending.

St Peter's Centre: \$540,000, 200 job losses. Again, they're probably imagining that. It hasn't happened. It's not going to happen. The cut hasn't really happened, it's just there.

Chedoke-McMaster: \$4.5 million, 400 positions eliminated—again probably just imagined because it really hasn't happened. I would like the government members to go to those employees, go to those individuals being affected as a result of your health care cut and tell them it has not happened.

I love the line, "We have to do this because of the 10 lost years," the great line my Tory friends like to use, that there were 10 lost years. I find it interesting that Mike Harris, who's now the Taxfighter, between 1981 and 1984 was in government and supported 16 tax increases for \$1.8 billion. Mike Harris did not vote against one of those tax increases. Mike Harris supported increases in personal income tax, OHIP premiums, beer taxes, fuel taxes, tobacco taxes, retail sales taxes and corporate income tax. This was the great Taxfighter between 1981 and 1984, and now he uses "10 lost years" as an excuse to gut our health care system.

It is disgraceful what this government is doing to health care across Ontario. You're going to realize very quickly that you can BS a lot of people across this province and you can try to fool a lot of people across this province, but health care is a promise you made, a promise you've broken, and a promise you're going to pay one hell of a political price for.

Even your friend Ralph Klein in Alberta had to back away from health care cuts because of the pressure. He realized that people were not going to put up with uncertainty about whether a local hospital was going to remain open, where they can receive first-class health care, the type of health care we've been used to across

this province. Fundamental to our system, to our province, is the ability to get quality health care, that when someone checks into a hospital or goes to a doctor's office, they get care because they're sick, not based on the amount they have in their bank account.

The system this government is moving to is one where people who are wealthy can jump the line, where people who can afford it get special treatment, where people who can afford it don't have to wait in line for surgery or special tests. This is the type of system you're encouraging by the cuts you're making. I don't believe for a moment that you're going to reinvest the money you have cut out of community hospitals, that you've cut out of health care systems across Ontario.

You're playing a shell game. What you're saying is, "We started health care at \$17.4 billion and we're going to end up with that again in four or five years." But the reality is that in between those years, you're going to destroy the system, destroy health care across Ontario.

You should be ashamed of yourselves. I'm telling you, in four years when we go back to the polls, you're going to look back and regret every single cut to health care, because the people of Ontario are going to punish you and punish you hard. If you think what happened to Brian Mulroney was bad, wait to see what happens to you and your caucus members and your friends. Come four years, you're going to pay a hell of a political price. Health care is going to bring this government down in four years, and I'll be here to enjoy that.

Mr Bisson: I would not pass up an opportunity to speak on a motion of no confidence in the Mike Harris government of Ontario. I would like to start by going back to what all this stems from, as the member from the Conservative Party said: the Common Sense Revolution. I think we need to understand clearly what the government said.

They said, "Health care, law enforcement and classroom funding won't be touched, but many other programs will be affected." What they tried to make people believe is that they can go into the different programs of the government of Ontario, all the various ministries outside those three key areas, and find what they said at the time was a \$5.5-billion saving they had already identified. Then they went to on to say they needed to find another \$500 million to effect the cuts that need to be made, in their view, to balance the budget of Ontario.

To that I say two things. First of all, to try to make people believe that you can pull \$6 billion out of the budget of Ontario and not affect services in some way is pretty misleading. We've seen the effects of—

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: I'd ask the member to withdraw his comments. You cannot use the language "misleading" in this House.

Mr Bisson: I didn't say the government was misleading—

The Deputy Speaker: I did not hear the term. Would the member please continue.

Mr Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr Speaker. To try to make people believe you can reduce the budget by the amount the Conservative Party talked about at the time is to try to make people believe there would not be any

effect felt across the province of Ontario. I can tell you in the communities across Ontario, and specifically in the communities I represent in northern Ontario, we have seen the effects that the \$6 billion, or the beginning of that, has had on a number of issues in northern Ontario, everything from the condition of our highways to the services we have been seeing in regard to what the MNR and other ministries do, as it relates to our daily lives in northern Ontario, being affected.

1720

I would just say to the government that yes, we need to be able to find a way to manage government more efficiently, but I think we should remember that you're there as a government to provide service to the people of Ontario, to make sure that in the end the services they need are in place. But what really makes me upset is that you said:

"We are ready to listen, to learn and to work with anybody who wants to join in and who can show us more creative, more effective ways to end the waste and duplication.

"Our commitment is carved in stone—a 20% cut in non-priority spending in three years."

There are people out there who want to work with the government. There are people in the health care sector at the Timmins and District Hospital in the city of Timmins who have been trying to plead with this government to make it recognize that the hospital is being cut by \$1.4 million this year. Yes, it is different from other hospitals across the province of Ontario, because it has already done—

The Deputy Speaker: Take your seat. I'm asking the member for Hamilton East to remove the sign.

Mr Agostino: This one here that says, "Not one cent"? Thank you, Mr Speaker.

Mr Bisson: This government is trying to make people in the city of Timmins and across the rest of northeastern Ontario believe that we can go in and we can cut \$1.4 million in the budget of the Timmins and District Hospital and no services will be affected.

To you, the government, I say, you are wrong. I am not only saying that, but the people of the district health council and the people who run our hospital say you're wrong, because the Timmins and District Hospital has worked for the past six to eight years to put in place an entire restructuring of our hospital services in the community of Timmins, not only to serve Timmins but to serve the region of northeastern Ontario in a regional hospital setting. We have operated that hospital at the same budget that was in place five years ago. We have effectively restructured the entire hospital. We have done the changes that need to be done to make that hospital as efficient as humanly possible.

The Minister of Health stands in this House, along with the Premier, and says cutting the budget next year by \$1.4 million at the Timmins and District Hospital is not contravening the promise made in the Common Sense Revolution. I say to you it is, because what it means to say and what people in my community who are more learned on this issue, who work directly at the hospitals, and those responsible for running it, are saying is, yes, it will affect the services because what it will mean is that

the hospital in the city of Timmins will have to shut services down in order to deal with the \$1.4 million.

If that is not a broken promise, I don't know what is. I call on this government to come to its senses and to apply a little bit of common sense, as they said they would in the election of 1995. Work with the city of Timmins, work with the people of the Timmins and District Hospital, the people on the district health council and the people across northeastern Ontario to do what we want to do, which is to move on to the next step, the restructuring of our hospital system in northeastern Ontario so that we can perform the regional care within the envelope of money we presently have. For you to do what you're doing now is a complete sham and it is against everything that you stood for in the election. I will fight you on it, because you are wrong.

Mr Jack Carroll (Chatham-Kent): I am pleased to participate in today's non-confidence motion from the official opposition. I believe when my comments are concluded, my position on the motion will be abundantly clear.

Last week I had an opportunity to make a statement in the House and I had a couple of choices. I made a statement about health care restructuring among our hospitals in Chatham. The other choice I had was to compliment one Shae-Lynn Bourne, who won the silver medal or the bronze medal at the world figure skating championships in Edmonton. I met with Shae-Lynn this weekend and I apologized to her for not mentioning her wonderful accomplishment, along with her partner, Victor Kraatz, in the Legislature last week, and explained to her that in fact the health care restructuring was much more significant for the long-term benefit of all the young people in our province.

I have to make some comments about a piece of literature that I received recently. The mail moves a little slower down in southwestern Ontario than it does around here. I just received this yesterday and it's from the member for Nickel Belt. As I watched him perform in the 35th Parliament, I was very much impressed with his integrity and his honesty and his caring attitude, and I was quite surprised when I saw this. I received this yesterday, which of course you all know was April Fool's Day, and I thought to myself, obviously somebody has played a terrible April Fool's joke on the member for Nickel Belt; they have written this and they have signed his name to it and he didn't know that, because he would not write this. But whoever did write it said a couple of interesting things. They say, "Seniors will pay a fee for all their prescription drugs." That means many seniors, our parents and grandparents, will have to choose between buying food or buying drugs they need.

I would like to quote from a comment made by the then Premier, Bob Rae, in 1993—and Mr Laughren of course was in attendance—when he said, "We're saying if we're going to reform the drug plan it is not unreasonable to say that those who can make a contribution should." That was then, this is now. Interesting.

They also say in this particular piece of literature here—they ask the question, "Would you prefer to say no to tax breaks and protect your health care?" I'm saying to the people of the province of Ontario, "You don't need

to make that choice." This government is committed to tax breaks and is committed to protecting health care. People don't need to make a choice.

In the last little while I've met some interesting people in the province of Ontario. While I was touring on Bill 26 and I was up in the wonderful northern part of our province I met a doctor who happened to be on the executive of the OMA. That doctor said to me:

"As you are going about what you're doing in your government, I want you to remember something. I have a patient who drives four hours on Monday morning; he takes a bus three hours to work in the mine while his wife stays home and takes care of the three children. I want you to remember that it is him you're fighting for. We doctors are going to be fine. We'll get by just fine, thank you. Take care of that person who is working hard to try to make a living in this province. Give him his tax cut."

I also met a surgeon. He has practised in other constituencies, practised in other provinces and in other countries, and he said to me: "Despite all the things that are going on and despite Bill 26, the patients and the doctors in the province of Ontario have really been spoiled. This is the finest place to practise and receive health care."

I also talked to a doctor in an emergency department who spoke to me about a patient who went to the emergency department at one hospital and complained about a terrible pain in his jaw, and they tested him and they said, "You have an abscessed tooth, sir," and they gave him a prescription for aspirin. He did not like that answer he got so he went to the next hospital and asked them if they would diagnose his problem and they said, "You have an abscess, sir, and you need a prescription for aspirin." He said: "No, no, I don't. I already had one of those." "Well, why did you come over here?" "Well, I didn't like what they told me at that hospital."

I also spoke to an OPSEU employee who was a part-time nurse and a part-time ambulance driver. He said to me in the middle of the strike, "I hope you guys don't back down because the waste in the health care system has to be discovered."

All those four people who talked to me during the process said the same thing: There is waste in the system; we do need to find it to make the system sustainable in the future.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker: Order.

Mr Carroll: In my area we have benefited from many of the reforms in the system. We've got a new dialysis program. We just announced \$2.1 million redirected into long-term-care facilities. We just announced \$425,000 for community-based long-term care. This new investment had to come from someplace. The taxpayers are broke. They don't have any more. It had to come from someplace. It had to come from reconfiguration, and we're fortunate in my area.

During the hearings on Bill 26, I had the privilege of spending a considerable amount of time with three fine ladies—the leader of the official opposition, the member for Oriole and the member for Beaches-Woodbine—in addition to three members of this caucus. I was very

much impressed with their sincerity as we listened on Bill 26. I was also very much impressed with their wealth of knowledge and their experience. The one thing I sensed from them was that they were interested in getting it done right, that quality, sustainable health care should transcend petty party politics. If I'm right in that perception, that that's what they really believe in—

Mr Agostino: Is that why you didn't accept any amendments from the opposition?

The Deputy Speaker: I am naming the member for Hamilton East.

1730

Mr Agostino: Is that on the record? Is it recorded in Hansard that I received a warning? Are you willing to state, Mr Speaker, that I received a warning from you earlier? Mr Speaker, a group of people is standing around the table speaking, and you totally ignored that.

The Deputy Speaker: When I'm standing, you sit.

Mr Agostino: Yes, sir.

The Deputy Speaker: There's a lot of interjection in the House this afternoon. I warned the member first without naming his riding. I warned him again when I mentioned his riding. If you think you can carry on in a parliamentary way, we will continue. Is that your wish?

Mr Agostino: Yes, Mr Speaker.

The Deputy Speaker: Okay. Would the member for Chatham-Kent continue.

Mr Carroll: If I'm right in my perception of these fine people who served on Bill 26 with me—

Mr Chris Stockwell (Etobicoke West): On a point of order, Mr Speaker: When this all started, there were 12 minutes on the clock, and now there are less than eight. Could you put the time back on, please?

The Deputy Speaker: Sorry, I can't put time on the clock. We'll continue.

Mr Carroll: If I'm right in my perception, I say to those folks with all due respect, and I'm sorry they're not here, your way didn't work. After 10 years of tax and spend and spend and tax, we're broke. The future of health care and all the programs in our province is in jeopardy. It's time to try a new approach. We are committed to preserving, indeed improving, health care. We said it during the campaign, we say it repeatedly in the House and we've demonstrated it with our commitment to reinvestment. We are a government that delivers on its promises. We are a government that promised to protect the health care funding envelope at \$17.4 billion. We will deliver on that promise.

I ask the members opposite, other than losing the last election, what's your problem?

The Deputy Speaker: The Chair recognizes the member for Etobicoke West.

Applause.

Mr Stockwell: Thank you, colleagues. I don't have much time; I've got six minutes.

I was quite interested in hearing this debate take place. I was very curious at the response that the Liberal Party members outlined with respect to the commitments and promises that this government made during the last campaign through the election process and how we've in fact delivered on those promises or, in their opinion, how we did not deliver on them.

There must be some history to this debate that needs to be put into perspective. The Liberal Party in government had a very interesting time, a five-year period when it managed the economy of this province. The member for Oriole, just entering, was for a substantial period of that time, if not all of it—I'm not sure—the Minister of Health.

The Conservative Party left power in 1985. In 1985 the annual budget for this province was \$26 billion. In those days \$26 billion seemed like a lot of money, but after 43 years of Conservative rule there was a decent budget that was set in place, the financing was reasonable and there was an AAA credit rating. Everything seemed to be going well. The people of this province decided they wanted a change in government and they elected the Liberal Party of Ontario headed by Mr Peterson.

Mr Marcel Beaubien (Lambton): No, they didn't.

Mr Stockwell: Well, they didn't actually.

Interjection: It was by default.

Mr Stockwell: That's true. Mr Rae and Mr Peterson entered the bedwetters' accord that put Mr Peterson into power.

A curious thing happened in those five years. During those five years the budget increased from \$26 billion to \$50 billion. They increased taxes by 33 times. Just a few of them: They increased the provincial sales tax. Then, cynical lot that they were, during the 1990 débâcle they offered to rescind that 1% increase in the middle of a campaign; they saw power slipping through their fingers. They introduced the commercial concentration tax, a tax levied against Metropolitan Toronto and the GTA to generate revenue to take from Metropolitan Toronto. Health care spending was out of control, over 10% per year for the five years the Liberals held office—a 10% per year increase in health care spending.

Then—the gall of this party, the party of mandatory opportunity, the party of balanced budgets and tax cuts in 1995, balanced budgets and tax cuts and mandatory opportunity and yell at your spouse and lose your house—this Liberal Party of Ontario has the nerve to present a resolution to this Legislature suggesting the Conservative government is not living up to its commitments in health care.

In health care it's come down to a simple, significant fact, along with a bunch of other problems that we are facing. Thanks to the last 10 years and two tax-and-spend administrations, we have become uncompetitive, our taxes are too high and as a jurisdiction we're overregulated and profoundly and seriously caught up in government's spiralling debt.

The simple solution to all these problems is: "Don't cut anything. Don't reduce any government services. Don't reduce spending. This will solve itself." Well, it doesn't, and people aren't prepared any more to accept tax hikes 33 times in five years of government.

We moved on to the socialist regime under Mr Bob Rae. Rather than taxing the people, he just borrowed the money. Health care continued to spiral out of control, health care continued to grow and spending was not sustainable.

1740

Ms McLeod, who comes into this Legislature today and writes this motion about the fact that we're not

managing the health care system properly when her government increased spending by 50% in five years in power, I think has a lot of nerve to criticize a government that's living by its commitments during a five-week campaign.

Further, this is the same party that sat in opposition to the NDP for five years and whose political principles and values have no relationship to what it speaks of today. These Liberals who sit before us—let me say that the best debates Liberals have are when they're alone; they can argue both sides of every issue.

We stand here today and we hear them suggesting to us that our cuts to health care are not acceptable, and not more than 12 months ago they were complaining to the NDP government that it was spending too much money. The same party said that the labour legislation the NDP introduced was no good. We withdraw the labour legislation and they say that's no good. The same party talked about employment equity being counterproductive. We withdraw employment equity and they say that's counterproductive.

When it comes right down to it, I think in the election itself it was clear. It's like their position on welfare: They're not in favour of workfare; they're in favour of mandatory opportunity. I believe this resolution should be filed in the same cabinet as mandatory opportunity.

Mrs Elinor Caplan (Oriole): I rise to participate in this debate as the Liberal caucus health critic and as a former Minister of Health. I would say to the members opposite that the protection of medicare and keeping your promise on health care is something that the people of Ontario are going to hold you accountable for, because as this vote of non-confidence says, you have clearly broken every single promise that you have made with respect to protecting health care.

You said "Not one penny," and we have seen \$1.3 billion cut from the hospitals of this province. Every community of this province is seeing service cuts. Services are being cut and people are now very concerned that they will not be able to get the care they need when they need it. That fear is threatening health services and that fear is threatening medicare. When I hear the member for Brampton South, Mr Clement, speak about how wonderful it is in the Carolinas, south of the border, Americanization of health care as the Harris government's true agenda strikes fear in me and it strikes fear in every member of this Parliament who believes in medicare and believes that it should be protected as a fundamental value of our country and as a fundamental value of the citizens of this province who believe medicare has served them well. The last thing they want, the very last thing they want is to move down the path of American-style health care.

Americans will tell you, when you visit the United States, how they envy us. They envy us because here you do not need a wallet biopsy, here you do not have to give your credit card before you enter a hospital and here, until very recently, people who worked in health care were proud.

But let me tell you what I am hearing from people on the front lines of health care. What they are saying is that the pink slips, the layoffs, the jobs that are being lost represent services in every community. Anyone who

believes the claptrap that is coming from the Conservatives opposite who say, "We are not cutting health care," is simply not hearing the truth.

Go and talk to the people in your hospitals. Go and talk to the people in your communities. The people who deliver front-line services are being laid off. You heard my leader give you the numbers earlier today. Those layoffs mean service cuts.

Let me tell you what a hospital administrator told me. He said that not only are services being cut, but hospitals are getting dirty. Infection control could well be a problem simply because the directive from this government to eliminate administration and eliminate first those things not directly at the bedside means people are laid off who keep our hospitals clean, safe and antiseptic. If you don't believe me, talk to your hospital administrators, talk to the nurses on the front line, talk to the people who care for people who need care. They will tell you the true state of the hospitals in your communities. They will tell you that they do not want an unaccountable, unelected individual coming into their community and telling them what they're going to have to do.

Everyone who appeared before the committee on Bill 26 said, "If you're going to have a restructuring commission, make sure the minister is the one who makes those decisions." Every community in this province is going to demand that the minister and each and every one of you stands accountable for the decisions that are made.

The Common Sense Revolution said: "We will not cut health care spending. It's far too important." The people of this province believed that meant you were going to protect the services that are so important to them. The people of this province thought that meant you were going to protect health care. Clearly, you have not done that. We have seen a hoax perpetrated on the people of this province, and they know what we all know: that Mike Harris, the Conservative caucus and the Common Sense Revolution never meant it when they told them they would protect health care. They know that the hospitals in their communities are downsizing and that services are being lost.

What the people of this province want to know from their government, and as a former minister I say this to you, what people want to know is, "Am I going to get the care I need when I need it?" The hospitals today and the doctors and the nurses in their communities are saying to them, "You may not be able to get that care." We are hearing that there are communities where paediatric services are being slashed to the bone. We hear of communities where women are going to have difficulty finding obstetrical services to deliver their babies. We know there are communities in a panic and in a crisis because of the cuts imposed by this government. Why have they imposed these cuts? To pay for a \$5-billion tax cut, a 30% cut to the income tax rate.

Over the next few years, the people of this province are going to deliver the message very clearly to this government that they would rather have the care they need when they need it in their community than a tax cut. They do not want to have to pay user fees. They do not want to have to give their credit card when they enter the hospital. They do not want American-style, two-tier medicine. They do not want Mike Harris's prescription.

We heard this government say, "No new user fees." The senior citizens and disabled persons, the people on welfare, when they heard that, they expected they would never see copayments and deductibles from a Harris government. They believed you when you said, "No new user fees."

You hear from the Canadian Mental Health Association how mental health patients are going to be disadvantaged by the copayment, the user fee you are imposing on them. Your parliamentary assistant in committee said, "We're working on that; we'll have a plan," yet at estimates your minister admitted they will have to beg their pharmacists and tell them they can't afford the user fee and maybe the pharmacist won't collect it. "Beg your pharmacist" is the policy of Jim Wilson and Mike Harris and Ernie Eves for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable in our society. "Barter for your drugs," they say to the sick mother and the sick children of this province who are on welfare and who will have to pay user fees and copayments.

Think about what you are doing, because as you threaten health services in this province you threaten the very fabric of our society. The people who elected you believed that you would protect those health services. The people who elected you believed that you would not bring in user fees. The people who elected you did not think you were going to lay off their nurses and their health care workers. The people who elected you did not think you were going to close their hospitals because Mike Harris stood there and said, "I have no plan to close hospitals."

The people of this province are feeling deceived and betrayed and they have no confidence that this government is actually going to do what they said they would do and protect health care and not cut one penny from health care and not bring in user fees, because they know that Bill 26, combined with the transfer payment announcement of \$1.3 billion in cuts over the next three years, is going to do exactly what you said you would not do.

I would say to this government that the last printing of your Common Sense Revolution was printed post the Martin budget, and you were very proud of the fact that you had taken into consideration all of the transfer changes that were coming from the federal government. And when I hear your Minister of Health stand in his place and blame everybody in the world for his problems, I would say to him that the last thing that the people of this province want or need is someone who, instead of showing leadership, whines and blames everybody else in sight. Let me say—

Interjections.

Mrs Caplan:—you can shout and you can yell and you can scream, but the people of this province are not going to allow you to get away with this cut to medicare; they are not going to let you get away with Americanizing medicare; they are not going to let you get away with closing their hospitals; they are not going to let you get away with cutting their services. They don't trust you. They believe that you are not to be trusted when it comes to health care. You have lost their confidence and this motion deserves to pass.

I'm proud of the statements that the leader of the official opposition made in her opening remarks. They are all true. I would appeal to the members of this House, to the members opposite in the Conservative benches, before it is too late, support this amendment, support this motion, and pass this non-confidence motion and let's have an election.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Mrs McLeod has moved want of confidence motion number 1. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. There will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1753 to 1758.

The Speaker: All those in favour of Mrs McLeod's motion will please rise one at a time.

Ayes

| | | |
|-------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Agostino, Dominic | Cordiano, Joseph | McLeod, Lyn |
| Bartolucci, Rick | Crozier, Bruce | Miclash, Frank |
| Bisson, Gilles | Duncan, Dwight | Morin, Gilles E. |
| Boyd, Marion | Gerretsen, John | Patten, Richard |
| Bradley, James J. | Grandmaître, Bernard | Phillips, Gerry |
| Caplan, Elinor | Gravelle, Michael | Pupatello, Sandra |
| Churley, Marilyn | Hoy, Pat | Ramsay, David |
| Cleary, John C. | Lalonde, Jean-Marc | Sergio, Mario |
| Conway, Sean G. | Laughren, Floyd | Wildman, Bud |
| Cooke, David S. | McGuinty, Dalton | |

The Speaker: All those opposed to Mrs McLeod's motion will please rise one at a time.

Nays

| | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|-----------------------|
| Arnott, Ted | Hardeman, Ernie | Rollins, E.J. Douglas |
| Baird, John R. | Hamick, Charles | Ross, Lillian |
| Barrett, Toby | Hastings, John | Runciman, Bob |
| Bassett, Isabel | Hodgson, Chris | Saunderson, William |
| Beaubien, Marcel | Hudak, Tim | Shea, Derwyn |
| Boushy, Dave | Johns, Helen | Sheehan, Frank |
| Brown, Jim | Johnson, Bert | Smith, Bruce |
| Carroll, Jack | Johnson, David | Spina, Joseph |
| Clement, Tony | Kells, Morley | Sterling, Norman W. |
| Cunningham, Dianne | Klees, Frank | Stewart, R. Gary |
| Danford, Harry | Leadston, Gary L. | Stockwell, Chris |
| Doyle, Ed | Marland, Margaret | Tascona, Joseph N. |
| Elliott, Brenda | Martiniuk, Gerry | Tilson, David |
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| Flaherty, Jim | Munro, Julia | Tumbull, David |
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| Gilchrist, Steve | Palladini, Al | Wood, Bob |
| Grimmett, Bill | Parker, John L. | Young, Terence H. |
| Guzzo, Garry J. | Preston, Peter | |

Clerk of the House (Mr Claude L. DesRosiers): The ayes are 29, the nays 65.

The Speaker: I declare the motion lost.

Pursuant to standing order 34, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member for Windsor-Sandwich has given notice of her dissatisfaction with the answer to her question given by the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism concerning youth employment. The member has up to five minutes for her statement and the minister or his parliamentary assistant will have up to five minutes to reply.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I'm pleased to have a few more moments so that I can address to the minister and allow him an opportunity to better answer a question that is facing so many youth across Ontario.

When we asked the minister in the House today what he is prepared to do to address the issue of a significant level of youth unemployment, the minister refused to answer the question. He did this again last week when we broached the issue, and for the last several months that we've been pushing the issue of youth employment that needs to be addressed by government. We are looking for answers and we are looking for direction and leadership to be shown by government for the youth of Ontario.

I have to say that it's significant that so many students from across the province wrote to me so immediately because they recognize the significance of the issue. They're concerned. They've heard the minister's comments in the House and feel, as one put it, "Please have him answer the question." So it's significant that they've answered so quickly to say: "What is the minister saying? Are we really not a priority for this government?" I hate to say that the answer the minister gave in the House today was just further evidence of that, that in fact the minister has no intention of telling us what his plans are, that there are rumours abounding that they are cutting the youth employment programs, that they're cutting the youth entrepreneur programs.

He refuses to even address that the level of unemployment is as high as it is. When we quoted yesterday that it's somewhere near 30%, the minister came back with a figure of some 16%. The minister refuses to acknowledge that 150,000 youth have dropped from that participation rate. When you include those 150,000 who have in despair simply stopped looking for work—they too are unemployed—when you factor those numbers in, our rate is now over 25%, and it's growing. In all of the pre-budget consultation that went on, committees came and said, "There is nothing we can see that is going to indicate an increase in jobs." In fact, by the Ministry of Finance's own records, unemployment overall will increase during this term.

What does that speak to in terms of youth? How are they going to be found in all of this? Given the severity of the issue, it's even worse, I suppose, to have to stand and listen to the kind of answer that we got in the House today. It's a significant issue and it's a serious one. I don't think we can be passed off with glib statements about "my announcement to freeze minimum wage." Freezing minimum wage may, if anything, leave the number of jobs similar to what they were last year. What will that have to do with increasing the number of youth who may be hired, if anything?

He quoted the Northern Ontario Tourist Outfitters Association. We spoke with them as well. They really didn't have any comment on how that was going to increase the number of youth who may be hired.

We talked to the Ontario Restaurant Association. Of course, most people in business would like to see a freeze in minimum wage, but that has nothing to do with an increasing level of hiring youth.

The minister's answers so far are simply not adequate, certainly not acceptable, and the youth are significantly worried, given the responses we've had in my office. As one student from Waterloo said, "This is a slap in the face." I've got to agree, because to stand on rhetoric and say the tax cut will be the answer for the youth of Ontario—I believe the youth need to be employed in order to benefit from the tax cut. Anything long-term they may be planning, having put all of their eggs in one basket, I certainly hope works, but we're talking about students today like the student who wrote me from Wilfrid Laurier University and said, "My cost is \$10,000 a year and I only have four months to make up that kind of income so that I can afford my next year's tuition." What will that student be facing in the face of threats to cut entire programs?

Today the minister indicated, "Sit down and watch what we're going to do." We want to know that this government has a plan. We want to know that the government is prepared to address it as an issue and set government policy accordingly, to give it the kind of status it deserves. The youth of Ontario are waiting for that. I expect a responsible answer from the minister.

The Speaker: The Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism has up to five minutes.

Hon William Saunderson (Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism): We gave you a very proper hearing, and I expect a proper hearing and no interruptions, because I would like to outline a response to you about your question. It's the third discussion you and I have had about youth employment. I can understand your concern and I want you to know that our government is very concerned about youth employment, as you are.

First of all, I want to clear up something on the record just for you. We use a figure of 16.3% for unemployment. That is the figure I got from our Ministry of Finance, the government, for the month of February.

Mr Dwight Duncan (Windsor-Walkerville): Are you happy about that?

Hon Mr Saunderson: Yes, I am, because I think it's right.

Regardless of whether it's 16% or 30%, it's still too high and we're not happy with that. I just want you to know that in the near future we will have an announcement which I think you'll be satisfied with about youth employment programs.

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): Why don't you do it now?

Hon Mr Saunderson: It's part of our policy, which will be announced very shortly. I want the rest of this House to know what we're doing about trying to create jobs and having the right climate to create jobs. If you think I am repeating myself, that's your problem, but I

have to tell you that what young people want more than anything else is not a short-term fix but a long-term job in a very stable economic climate.

I want to tell you about a couple of trips I have made into the United States and to Europe. I have spoken to a number of companies and organizations in those regions. I told them what we were doing in Ontario and I'm going to tell it to you again, because that's what impresses them to start the new companies or new operations which are starting to happen in this province. I alluded to one this afternoon and there are many more examples of that.

I said to them we are spreading the word that Ontario is a very positive place in which to do business and create jobs. We're keeping our election promises, and you know what those promises are. Those promises are to create jobs and attract investment to Ontario. Some of these things we are doing, I tell these organizations and companies and people, are putting our fiscal house in order.

We've frozen Hydro rates for the next five years. We've removed the employer health tax on the first \$400,000 of payroll. We have repealed labour Bills 40 and 91, and you know what those did to this province. That is the most single job-destroying pieces of legislation that we've seen here in a long time.

We have introduced and passed Bill 7. That goes a long way to creating jobs and sending people here. We have, as I said before, frozen the minimum wage. We have repealed the quota-based employment law, another way to discourage job creation.

We are going to reduce the personal tax rate by 30%, and you know that. That's a very important thing. There's a recent economic study that says tax cuts create jobs and actually create growth.

Mrs Papatello: Your own studies show you will have greater unemployment next year. Your own figures show you will have higher unemployment.

The Speaker: If the member for Windsor-Sandwich would come to order.

Hon Mr Saunderson: I ask you to hear me out as I heard you. I think that's only good manners, and they should be practised.

We have eliminated the Workplace Health and Safety Agency, which was a very onerous thing to creating jobs. We're creating a stable, predictable environment for companies to come and do business in this province.

Smile as you may, but it's going to create the jobs that you're talking about. We want long-term jobs. We want an environment that's predictable. Companies do not want to come here and have unpleasant surprises and bumps.

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): You are announcing long-term jobs tomorrow?

Hon Mr Saunderson: We will be promising long-term jobs. We've promised them already, 725,000 of them. I've quoted you the figure for February, the 76,000 new jobs for the last six months ending February. Those are good statistics. We are going to build on them.

I appreciate your paying such good attention to what I've had to say, because I really believe that this is the kind of environment that will create the jobs for our young people.

The Speaker: There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn the House to be carried. This House stands adjourned till 1:30 of the clock tomorrow afternoon.

The House adjourned at 1812.

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Publications



No. 52

N° 52

ISSN 1180-2987

Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 36th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

Première session, 36^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Wednesday 3 April 1996

Mercredi 3 avril 1996



Speaker
Honourable Allan K. McLean

Président
L'honorable Allan K. McLean

Clerk
Claude L. DesRosiers

Greffier
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 3 April 1996

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 3 avril 1996

*The House met at 1334.
Prayers.*

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NEW LISKEARD CUBS

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): I'm very proud to stand in my place today to announce that the New Liskeard Cubs of the Great North Midget League have won the all-Ontario championship and are going to be on their way to the Canadian championships in a couple of weekends.

As the Northern Daily News in Kirkland Lake had reported:

"Cubs Are Tops—New Liskeard Wins All-Ontario Crown.

"They were too good, and that's the truth.

"The New Liskeard Cubs are now central Canadian champions and will be playing in the Air Canada Cup in Burnaby, BC from April 16 to 21 after whipping the North York Canadiens 5-2 in Sunday's final in Waterloo.

"Cubs, champions of the Great North Midget League, dominated their foes during the week-long tournament in Waterloo winning seven games and tying one in eight matches." They scored 37 goals and only gave up 13 in that whole tournament.

"Cubs will now face even tougher competition as they will meet the best half-dozen midget AAA hockey teams in the country. But the team has shown no signs of faltering yet and has not lost a big game this season."

I'd like to congratulate all the members of the New Liskeard Cubs, Don Shepherdson, Claude Denommé and all the supporters in New Liskeard, and wish them well in the all-Canadians.

CANADA ASSISTANCE PLAN

Mr Tony Martin (Sault Ste Marie): The atmosphere in this country and indeed this province has changed dramatically. Whereas we as a community of people acted in a caring and supportive way for much of our time as a nation, bringing in a national pension plan and unemployment insurance and a national health care program, things that have come to define us both at home and abroad, it is disheartening to hear the voices of fear and anger, indeed of resentment and in some instances hate, become so obvious and so loud. But even more disturbing is the playing on or taking advantage of these so obviously destructive and negative sentiments by political leaders for no other reason but to make political gain.

On Monday of this week we saw another crack in the up until now taken for granted protective shield we wove

around ourselves as a people who saw themselves as family with common national ties. The Canada assistance plan is now gone. No more common standards, no more commitment to fairness and justice across this land.

We have all heard of the trickle-down theory of economics. Tommy Douglas called it trickle-on. Mr Chrétien has picked up from where Brian Mulroney left off. We are being trickled on royally by the federal government and Mike Harris is gleefully flushing us all, programs, jobs and services, down the toilet.

MEMBER FOR NICKEL BELT

Mr John Hastings (Etobicoke-Rexdale): I rise in the House today to comment on the shameful waste of taxpayers' dollars and the fearmongering of Ontarians that a member of the previous NDP government has resorted to. The member for Nickel Belt has been mailing letters province-wide for the lone purpose of distorting the facts about what our government has done to improve health care in this province.

In his letter, the member for Nickel Belt asks if we really need a 30% tax cut. That's more like asking whether a person needs prescription drugs, transportation or food. Our government has improved health care in many ways: by spending \$15.5 million to improve ambulance service across Ontario; by providing greater access through the Ontario drug benefit program to allow 144,000 more Ontarians to be covered than were protected before; by expanding funding to fight against anorexia and bulimia; by reducing the waiting time for cardiac care patients requiring lifesaving heart surgery; by expanding kidney dialysis; by immunizing all elementary and secondary school students for measles.

I would like to remind the member for Nickel Belt that it was his government that raised taxes 35 times for Ontario citizens. In answer to the question, "Do we need a tax cut in Ontario?"—absolutely. My response is an unequivocal yes.

POTHOLE OF THE YEAR CONTEST

Mr Mike Colle (Oakwood): I rise in the House today to announce the first annual Pothole of the Year contest, due to the public outrage over the conditions of our roads in this province.

The Provincial Auditor has warned that 60% of Ontario roads are substandard, and the Ministry of Transportation has made massive cuts to road maintenance and repair on top of that. Nobody wins when driving on unsafe roads that are filled with potholes. Serious accidents and costly repair bills result from driving over potholes.

Motorists across Ontario are fed up and frustrated with a Minister of Transportation who just blames others and

refuses to take responsibility for the crisis facing our motorists from Cornwall to Kenora. Safety and good, reliable roads are important.

The Pothole of the Year Contest is being held in an attempt to bring the severity of this matter to the attention of the Ontario people and the Minister of Transportation. What is needed is a comprehensive, province-wide road repair program and the stopping of the offloading of substandard roads on municipalities that cannot afford to fix them.

I urge all motorists in Ontario to expose their local potholes and help push the Minister of Transportation into doing more than just blaming others and whining that it's Ottawa's fault.

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WATER QUALITY

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): Those of us who live in the province of Ontario are blessed in that we have long been able to take clean drinking water for granted. It's practically a birthright. There are so many parts of this world in which that is sadly not the case.

I want to suggest it's time to put an end to that complacency here in Ontario. The recent problems with the contamination of the water supply in Collingwood have concerned us all, though none more so than the local residents. It appears that Collingwood has enough money to be able to solve the problem, but what assurance do the other 43 communities at risk have that they can deal with this problem if it hits them? I think if there is a lesson in Collingwood, it's to remind us what a precious and valuable resource clean, pure, healthy drinking water is.

This government likes to pretend that Ontarians aren't concerned about the environment these days, but it continues to cut and slash. This government has even eliminated funding for new water filtration systems and the CURB program, which was designed to prevent agricultural runoff, believed to be the cause of the problem in Collingwood. Absolutely incredible.

It's time that this environment minister, apparently so intent on destroying the environmental gains of the last 30 years, started to realize that when she allows the environment to be compromised, she allows our health to be compromised.

YOUNG OFFENDERS

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I rise today as the member for Scarborough Centre in order to bring to the attention of this House the urgent campaign of a store owner in my riding.

Less than a year ago, Mr Tom Amba's kid brother Louis was brutally murdered while working in Tom's store, Tom Houston Boots, on Kingston Road in Scarborough. Tom's kid brother was stabbed 54 times. Charged is a 17-year-old male who is protected under the Young Offenders Act. Tom's kid brother was savagely murdered for a few hundred dollars robbed from the store. This madness must end now.

Tom Amba has undertaken a campaign across the country which he has termed the Kid Brother Campaign,

calling for real and lasting changes to the Young Offenders Act. I am proud to be wearing the campaign pin today which Tom gave to me at my recent town hall meeting on youth crime at Midland Avenue Collegiate in Scarborough. At that meeting, 500 concerned residents came out to voice their concerns and offer solutions to the growing problem of youth crime.

I was proud that the Attorney General of Ontario, the Honourable Charles Harnick, attended the meeting as my special guest—proud because it shows how much our government cares about this problem and how determined we are to push for changes.

Tom Amba has a petition with more than 500,000 signatures from Canadians who demand real and lasting changes to the Young Offenders Act, but the federal government refuses to act. They have not made the changes that people are calling for. When will Mr Chrétien and Mr Rock start listening to the people? The 500 people from Scarborough Centre who attended my meeting can't be wrong. The 500,000 people who signed Mr Amba's Kid Brother petition cannot be wrong. When will the Prime Minister start to listen?

FERRY SERVICE FEES

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): The council and residents of Amherst Island, a small municipality in my riding, are extremely concerned about their ferry subsidy, which as of January 1 this year has been temporarily cut back on a holdback basis by 15%, or about \$160,000 on an annualized basis. This is the first time the monthly subsidy amounts have been reduced.

Council and the residents fear that the 15% cut will become permanent in the May budget. This could be devastating to this small community of 486 full-time residents that today is unsure of its future. The ferry service is the lifeline of the township and it's the only way to grocery stores, doctors, services, markets and jobs. It has a municipal tax base of only \$170,000 that it raises for its own purposes.

To make up the reduction in the subsidy would require the township to double its property taxation this year unless drastic action is taken by the Minister of Transportation and the township. The township already has had to raise the fares on the ferry from \$3.50 to \$5 a trip, and eliminate runs, raising a projected further revenue of \$67,000. Despite these measures, they will still be \$100,000 short if the 15% cut is made permanent.

The council has continued to lobby the MTO to restore the full funding. The reeve fears the high fares will strangle the community. Council has requested a meeting with Minister Palladini. Minister, will you meet with them prior to the spring budget and also pay back the \$62,000 that MTO still owes them for last year? The island community cannot afford—

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member's time has expired.

ONTARIO DAIRY INDUSTRY

Mr Len Wood (Cochrane North): My statement today is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs concerning the northern Ontario dairy industry.

Proposed changes by the Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission would bring an end to the dairy industry in my riding of Cochrane North. The commission plans to amend regulations covering the distribution of fluid milk products, allowing producers from southern Ontario to access customers throughout northern Ontario with a view to reducing the cost of milk locally. But this is not guaranteed, as transportation costs are considerably higher in the north. If the minister agrees to these changes, it would cause a loss of jobs in the Kapuskasing area and damage the local economy.

In anticipation of the negative impact of these changes, as of March 31 the Community Dairy of Kapuskasing laid off four of its 11 employees, and it is owned mostly by 41 local shareholders. One of two Hearst milking operations will be closing by the end of this year; another supplier is thinking about quitting the business after being in it for nine years. Now Beatrice Foods, concerned about the lack of consultation, is asking for public hearings to review the proposed changes.

It makes no sense to destroy these local businesses. The Kapuskasing Community Dairy has been contributing to the Kapuskasing economy since 1935. I might ask the question, how much has the Conservative government been contributing to the local community since 1935? Very little, as far as the people there are concerned; last year, for that matter, considerably less than what the Kapuskasing dairy has done since 1935.

HIGHWAY HELP PROGRAM

Mr Wayne Wettlaufer (Kitchener): It is with a great deal of pleasure that I rise today to congratulate the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police for its establishment of the Highway Help program. Highway Help is a roadside safety program being coordinated by the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. It is designed to aid motorists stranded on a highway to safely receive help by creating partnerships between motorists concerned with safety and the Ontario police.

The focus and goal of the Highway Help program is to educate Ontario residents about safety procedures when drivers are forced to pull their vehicles over to the side of a highway. As part of the program, this special, high-quality, reflective plastic "Call Police" sign is hooked on to the driver's window, allowing stranded motorists to communicate a clear need for help to passing motorists without ever leaving their vehicle.

It is a unique program because it has the support of police services across Ontario, which recognize the official OACP Highway Help sign. It is also unique because it provides motorists who wish to help others with a simple method to do so without endangering the safety of either party.

The OACP launched a pilot program in the Waterloo region this past December. The pilot was a resounding success and is scheduled for launch province-wide this May, made possible through the support of corporate sponsors. The OACP will be formally introducing the Highway Help program at a news conference at Metro Toronto Police headquarters on April 30.

I know I convey the sentiment of every member of this House when I say congratulations to the members of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. Well done.

VISITORS

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): I'd like to inform the members of the Legislative Assembly that we have in the Speaker's gallery today Irina Khromenko, secretary for international relations with the Christian-Democratic Party of Ukraine, and Mr Derm Whelan, chief electoral officer, the province of Alberta. Join me in welcoming our guests.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

PERSONAL PROPERTY SECURITY LEGISLATION

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): Later today I will be introducing for first, hopefully second, and third reading, amendments to the Personal Property Security Act. This act, which is essential to credit-granting in Ontario, establishes an electronic registry which allows lenders to search and register security interests against personal property or collateral.

During the recent strike, the personal property security system was unable to operate because the mainframe computer on which it depends had to be shut down. The proposed amendments would extend a short grace period to creditors whereby they could register or renew certain security interests that could not be registered or renewed during the strike.

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The amendments would offer a grace period of five or 10 days, beginning on the day the system becomes operational again, in which to take the necessary steps to preserve the priority of their security interests. Without these amendments creditors could lose the priority of their security interests and collateral vis-à-vis other creditors. This is extremely important to many private individuals and both large and small lenders and businesses.

While I'm sure most of the honourable members are familiar with the severity of the problems that the loss of priority of a security can cause, some may not be so, so I'd like to outline a simple, factual situation that provides a typical example of the kind of financial hardship that could result.

Let us say Jane Smith has loaned her savings to her brother to help him run his company. Her registration under the Personal Property Security Act expired on March 1. Ms Smith was unable to renew her registration because of the strike. On April 5 the brother's company goes bankrupt. Ms Smith has failed to register a renewal and will be treated as an unsecured creditor rather than as a secured creditor and will likely lose most if not all of her money.

These amendments will benefit all lenders, including small businesses and individuals. In fact, because large financial institutions generally process their security interest renewals in advance, they have already taken care of most of their expiry periods. But small businesses are not staffed to do this and clearly need these amendments to this act.

In summary, these amendments to the Personal Property Security Act will restore order to the registration system as a whole and may mean the difference between bankruptcy and prosperity for some of the people in Ontario.

Lastly, I'd like to thank my critics in the opposition parties for their cooperation in bringing these matters forward to their caucuses as I consulted with them on the bill prior to introducing it today.

NATURAL RESOURCES LEGISLATION

Hon Chris Hodgson (Minister of Natural Resources, Northern Development and Mines): I'll be rising later today to introduce the Ministry of Natural Resources Statute Law Amendment Act, 1996, a housekeeping bill which will amend legislation under three existing acts.

The proposed amendments will help the Minister of Natural Resources deliver more cost-effective and efficient programs and services and better manage our natural resources.

First, amendments to the Game and Fish Act limit licences to hunt black bear to one licence per person per year. The amendments also allow the MNR to prohibit the sale of black bear parts, regardless of origin.

MNR has also been asked by the province's agricultural community to provide them with the means to control nuisance deer under carefully controlled conditions that are consistent with ethical harvest practices. MNR will streamline government operations and cut red tape by replacing the Game and Fish Hearing Board with a hearing officer, who will be accountable to the Minister of Natural Resources.

Amendments to the Crown Forest Sustainability Act allow the Minister of Natural Resources to enter into agreements to perform forest management responsibilities for some licensees on crown forest management units for a fee. Bill 171 looked after the large forest companies. We want to make sure that the small operators have increased options on crown management units. Changes also make it an offence to obstruct MNR employees who are monitoring compliance with the Crown Forest Sustainability Act.

Amendments to the Provincial Parks Act will enable the Minister of Natural Resources to set park fees and collect and retain revenues under the act in a special-purpose account, which will allow reinvestment in the improved services and facilities for all park users. The public interest in Ontario's provincial parks system will continue to be protected.

The amendments I have outlined will help ensure the MNR can continue to increase efficiency in its operations, promote our provincial parks and effectively manage and preserve Ontario's natural resources.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I have an announcement to make that is of importance to young people in Ontario. It's my pleasure today to present the result of the work of a number of people and the cooperation of a number of ministries. In particular, I'd like to acknowledge the leadership of the Premier and the cooperation of two of my colleagues, the Minister of Environment and Energy and the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism. Without that cooperation this announcement would not be possible.

I'm happy to announce today that this government is creating 29,000 summer jobs for the young people of this province. That is 5,000 more jobs than last year. I am also very pleased to note that the taxpayers will be paying \$3 million less to support this year's program. In other words, we're going to be doing much more and much better with taxpayers' dollars.

These jobs for youth will be created through a new initiative that we're calling Ontario Summer Jobs. The Ontario summer jobs program will offer students a wide range of opportunities, including environmental projects, public and private sector positions, jobs in northern communities and entrepreneurial opportunities for students who want to start their own businesses.

As well as directly supporting thousands of jobs, the program will also offer information and referral services to equip our young people with appropriate employment and job search skills.

This government recognizes the importance of giving young people an opportunity to work. Even though the province is facing serious financial challenges, we remain committed to giving our young people a chance to gain valuable work experience.

We have already announced our intention of making the secondary school program more relevant to those students who choose to go to college or directly to work. Co-op and work experience programs are going to be expanded to give students more insight into possible career choices. We will introduce formal transition-to-work training programs in partnership with local employers. The Ontario summer jobs program is another key element as we help our young people take that first step on the road to self-reliance.

The reason we've been able to create 5,000 more jobs than last year, at less cost to the taxpayer, is partly because we have refocused funding for youth employment and partly because we have reached out to increase the involvement of the business community in our summer jobs program. Partnerships with the business community will continue to be very important to this government's broad strategy to get the Ontario economy moving. Jobs for young people is one area where involvement by the business community is vitally important.

Employing the youth of today is an investment in the workforce of tomorrow. It's an investment that will pay enormous returns to employers and young people alike. By giving young people a chance to gain experience and learn working skills, we are helping to ensure that they will have a fair chance to lead productive, independent lives. They will be ready to take their place in the

revitalized, prosperous Ontario that this government is working to create.

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): Today is a victory. Today is a victory for the young people of Ontario. Today we saw the government blink.

I must say this is an exciting day. It's not just exciting for the Liberal caucus—because it was the Liberal caucus that made this an issue. Only last week, the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism stood up in the House and said: "The youth unemployment rate? Why, it's not that high." Not only that, they said: "Well, we're going to fix that. We're going to freeze the minimum wage. Oh, that tax cut, that's going to help the youth." They disregarded it as an issue.

The Liberal caucus stood by the young people of Ontario, and we heard from them. We heard from people from the north, the south, the east and the west. All of the students responded and said, "You must hear us, because we're important too." I've got to tell you that I'm very excited, because the Liberal caucus will continue to be the voice for the young people of Ontario, because we knew we could make a difference. The young people who will benefit are going to be there and they'll continue to hold your feet to the fire in terms of what future they have in this province.

I want to say that I have some questions, and I'm going to give them the benefit of the doubt for some time. We must question how we're going to get 5,000 more jobs when we have \$3 million less in funding.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): Pupatello for leader. You finally found a leader over there.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): The member for Grey-Owen Sound is out of order.

Mrs Pupatello: However, we're going to wait and see exactly what the play is. We don't want to find out at the end that the government will fudge numbers in order to show an increased number of jobs. We are going to hold their feet to the fire, we are going to continue to speak for the youth of Ontario and we are more than pleased that the Liberal Party was able to do this.

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I too want to congratulate my colleague for having brought this issue to the fore. We have absolutely no idea whether this government would have done anything had we not brought this forward and had the youth of this province not replied in the way they did. To the youth of Ontario: Good job for sticking up for yourselves.

1400

PERSONAL PROPERTY SECURITY LEGISLATION

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): I want to reply to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations. We're pleased to join you today in supporting the amendments you are proposing that will benefit all the lenders, small businesses and individuals of this province. I only hope, sir, that you will prevail upon the Minister of Finance to do the same thing with your proposed tax cut so that more than 50% of the lower wage earners in this province will get the bulk of the money and not just 10%. You're a very influential minister when you can get

this kind of thing on the table. We only hope you can prevail upon the Minister of Finance to listen to you as well.

NATURAL RESOURCES LEGISLATION

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I stand to reply to the statement by the Minister of Natural Resources, which I think everyone would be excited to know is a housekeeping bill, which tells you something. We applaud the minister for some of the things he's done in this particular housekeeping bill—not very exciting—but I think we should bring people's attention to the more substantive parts of what the minister is saying here today.

What he is saying to the small operators in Ontario's forests is, "You now have the privilege of paying more fees to the government of Ontario." Sounds like a tax hike to me. That's what he's saying. He's saying that the Crown Forest Sustainability Act, to which he was totally opposed—I remember that—now will allow crown officers to move in even more obtrusive ways that he objected to strenuously when he was on this side of the floor.

I also want to talk a little bit about his announcement about provincial parks. It's the same message. The message we're seeing about provincial parks is that the people of Ontario will now have the privilege of paying more taxes, of paying more fees, to visit their own parks, the parks they bought, paid for and have maintained for generations.

I say to the minister, the sleight of hand here is not all that good. This is more than a housekeeping bill; this is a tax grab of major proportions. It will hurt small businesses in northern Ontario and in your part of the world, and it will hurt the people who want to go to provincial parks.

The second thing I want to say about provincial parks is that I think this may be the first step towards privatization.

Ms Shelley Martel (Sudbury East): I want to respond to the statement made by the Minister of Natural Resources. His statement today reminds me of the situation we faced here on Monday when, in the face of huge layoffs of thousands and thousands of teachers, the debate that occurred was that the Minister of Education had as his priority bringing forward the College of Teachers bill.

The Minister of Natural Resources today is putting forward a bill which basically deals with some housekeeping items, and in the face of that we have a Conservative government which is involved in secret negotiations with the big pulp and paper and forestry companies to give away 8.2 million hectares of public resources to these companies with no public input, no public consultation—all in secret, all to his friends.

In December, we revealed in this House that the MNR was involved in these negotiations behind closed doors to give away all of this public resource. We revealed at the time that the ministry was involved in negotiations with Stone Consolidated and Avenor for the crown management units at Red Lake; with Stone for the crown

management unit in Fort Frances; and with E.B. Eddy, with Yaeger and with St Marys Paper for the crown management units in Sault Ste Marie and Wawa. We further revealed that at that point in time about 2,000 MNR staff were going to lose their jobs as a consequence.

We demanded in this House that the minister stop the negotiations, that he institute a completely full, open process so that independent loggers, so that native and non-native communities, so that other organizations that have an interest in how forests are used in the province could participate in these important discussions.

What has been the result? Nothing. The negotiations continue. There's no public process. There's no participation by all the people who have a right to be involved in determining the future of the crown management units. Shame on you. You should be in the House today opening up a complete process that allows people to participate in these very important decisions.

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I want to respond to the Minister of Education and Training's statement today. We welcome it, although it's three months late, and I really wonder why it took this long for the minister to respond to the letter I sent to him in mid-March pointing out the need for announcements on summer job creation for youth.

It's important to recognize that this statement comes after the government cancelled the JumpStart program our government put in place, and simply, what the government is doing is changing the name of the Jobs Ontario program we had in place to another name.

The government doesn't seem to recognize that there is a crisis in youth employment in this province, that youth employment was over 16% last month, that February over February, unemployed youth in this province, there were 15,000 more people looking for work than last year.

The government makes a great to-do in this statement that it is creating 5,000 more jobs this year than were created last year. I guess the reason is that they are hoping the public will think this is simply greater involvement from the private sector, when I suspect what's happening is that there are going to be more jobs because they will be of shorter duration and will be paid less, in order to ensure there's a total number that is higher.

There's no question that there needs to be youth employment programs for young people because this government has increased tuition fees, and has increased tuition fees at a time when the income-contingent loan program is not in place and probably will not be in place for two years, so it's going to be more expensive for young people to be able to pay for their education than it has been over the last number of years, even with the increases over the last number of years, and the promise of the income-contingent program is just pie in the sky because there's nothing going on between this government and the federal government to bring it into place.

I wonder what this government is actually going to do about the overall youth employment crisis we face in this province. We appreciate there is an attempt here to deal

with the need for jobs in the summertime, but what is this government going to do to try to move beyond the silly comments made by the Minister of Economic Development, Trade and Tourism, who seems to think that the only good job creation program in this province for young people is his tax cut?

ORAL QUESTIONS

UNEMPLOYMENT

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): I have a question for the Premier. I would like to deal this afternoon with one of the most important emerging issues facing not only Ontario, but probably our society as a whole in the western world. We're seeing more and more examples of corporations laying off thousands of workers at the very time those corporations are enjoying unprecedented or at least substantial profits, sometimes the highest profits in their history. Premier, do you believe that corporations that are making higher and higher profits should at the same time be chopping the jobs of often long-term and loyal employees?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I'd be interested in knowing what the member believes corporations should do. My own belief is that good corporations ought to have in mind employee relationships, good social responsibility, community responsibility, provincial responsibility, national responsibility, indeed global responsibility.

I think the long-term, successful corporations which most shareholders are looking towards do in fact reflect that. There are, though, from time to time difficult corporate decisions that have to be made. I won't agree with all of them; sometimes I don't agree with any of them. But they are their dollars, it is their money, they are their shareholders and it is their decision to make.

1410

What we can do as a government and plan to do—every corporate survey we've done, including a recent one from the CFIB today, indicates that if we could have a competitive climate here, both taxwise and regulatory-wise, this will provide the opportunity for businesses to grow and hire, as opposed to constantly looking at how they have to be more efficient to compete. We're certainly going to do everything we can to try and inculcate those attitudes in the corporate sector of Ontario and Canada. As you've said, competitiveness is a North American and perhaps a global problem today. But certainly those would be my views. If the member shares those views, if he believes there are some things we could be doing together in a good corporate sense, in a non-partisan way, we'd be glad to do that.

Mr Bradley: I am glad the Premier is seeking some guidance from others in this assembly but I want to go back to the Premier, because he was elected to lead this province. I'm interested because of his view, for instance, that the private sector is the place where jobs are to be created. In years gone by, people understood—they didn't like it but they understood—if a company was losing a lot of money and was laying people off. Today we're

seeing companies making a lot of money and laying people off, some would say for the purpose of a temporary blip in the stock market, in other words, to please shareholders with that temporary blip in the stock market. The tendency has been for the initial hit to come down in the stock market.

If we don't have these people working, we're not going to have people to purchase the products and the services that will be needed to provide future jobs in our economy. Do you believe that you, as Premier, have a special responsibility in this province to address this problem with the senior leaders of the corporate sector—the banks, General Motors, Bell Canada and others—all of whom have made substantial profits while at the same time laying workers off?

Hon Mr Harris: Yes, we do. We are in consultation with all employers, large and small, and of course we're doing everything we can to encourage more job creation, particularly in the province of Ontario. I don't apologize for finally coming out and acknowledging that we're going to compete with other premiers and governors who come in here and think they can raid jobs in the province of Ontario.

In a very aggressive way, we're doing everything we can in there, including discussions with those employers. If the member would like to come with me to some of those discussions and has other suggestions—I don't believe there is a legislative remedy that's being proposed—if you have one that you and your party think is appropriate, we would certainly take a look at it. It's not our intention to legislate that a private sector employer has to hire somebody, but short of that, we're doing everything we can. If it is your contention that there is something legislatively, I'd be pleased to see you table that.

Mr Bradley: Premier, in late January this year you had the opportunity to attend a conference in Davos, Switzerland, which had a lot of people gathered together who are interested and expert in international finance. Klaus Schwab made a presentation to you and to others who were there. He said:

"Companies have an obligation to their employees. While they cannot guarantee lifetime employment, companies should help ensure future employability.

"Every day someone works for a company, that person should have the opportunity to acquire new skills and capabilities.

"The winners in globalization have an obligation to assist the losers. Those who benefit the most should support social programs and income support...for those who end up as losers."

Do you believe that you, as the Premier of this province, have an obligation to put in place policies which will encourage that so we don't have a continued situation where corporations are pulling profits out of their companies and leaving the bodies in the street?

Hon Mr Harris: I think the most important thing we can do that is within our jurisdiction, within our responsibility, is to make sure that Ontario is a very competitive place in which to create jobs and to employ people. We look at some of the barriers over the last 10 years that have been put in place, some of the regulation, some of

the red tape, some of the payroll taxes, which the Liberal Party was the heaviest on—income taxes, for example.

I'm very pleased, actually. I know today the CFIB released a survey of its employers and their membership, and of course these collectively are the largest employers and the creators of new jobs. They indicate, I think to the tune of—either in a significant way, in a big help or some help—about 80%, that income tax cuts will encourage them to hire more people, pay more money. Of course we're very interested in all employers having the climate to do that.

With regard to the larger companies, yes, I think we want to point out if there is ever any evidence of a company that is doing something on a very short-term, quick-fix basis, the odds are that's a company that's heading for bankruptcy and not going to do very well in the long term. Those are not the good kind of corporate companies. Those that are doing it to guarantee long-term security and market share for the employees are the ones that of course will be around for a much longer time.

But I repeat, if the Liberal caucus and party and leadership candidates have a piece of legislation where they think we should legislate that companies have to do some things, I invite you to table it and let us all look at it.

AGRICULTURAL FUNDING

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. For months prior to the June 1995 election, you solemnly, piously and repeatedly travelled the province and pledged that if favoured with the responsibility of office, you and your Tory colleagues would not cut the agriculture ministry budget any further because, as you said repeatedly and everywhere, agriculture had done more than its share.

Minister, when you took office your departmental spending budget was in the neighbourhood of \$450 million. In the first nine months of your administration of that department you have, in absolute breach of your solemn promise, taken \$25 million out of that budget. Given the solemnity of your promise to rural Ontario, Minister, how is that budget cut possible?

Hon Noble Villeneuve (Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs, minister responsible for francophone affairs): To the honourable member for Renfrew North who in the last 10 years saw 65 tax increases come along, I will simply set the record straight: \$13.1 million was removed from the agricultural budget simply to meet some of the requirements that had to be met in order to try and balance a budget—very difficult.

We promised no cuts to agricultural programs. We have delivered these programs more efficiently and will continue to deliver them more efficiently.

Mr Conway: Let me be clear. This question and this issue is about the worth of the word of the member from Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry. You promised and you said in your electoral platform that you would not cut the budget of the Ministry of Agriculture. In the first nine months of your administration you have already cut the budget by \$26 million.

We now have the spectacle of your colleague from Brant-Haldimand, to pick one, who is saying, "I'm worried that my government is going to make a liar out of me." And the members from Prince Edward, Hastings, St Catharines-Brock and Lambton, to name four others, are worried and they are saying publicly, "It appears that we have broken our promise."

1420

My question is, what are you going to say to those people in the farm community, including the people of Renfrew, the farm community that I met with the other day, who said, "We've got \$25 million in cuts already and now they are talking about cutting another \$130 million to \$150 million"? How is that not a complete breaking of faith with what you promised?

Hon Mr Villeneuve: We promised to cut no programs and to deliver them more efficiently, and that's exactly—
Interjection.

Hon Mr Villeneuve: There is no doubletalk here. It's simply to deliver the programs more efficiently. When my colleagues are able to discuss these things with me, contrary to what possibly was the situation when the Liberals were in power, we do listen to our backbench members, we respect our backbench members, and we work with them. I appreciate the fact that they are able to convey to me the thoughts of their constituents.

Mr Conway: Minister, I understand that you're soon going to Japan. Let me tell you, that manure spreader of yours won't get you across the Pacific, and it's not going to get you through this broken promise. Your colleagues, Mr Fox from Prince Edward-Lennox, Mr Beaubien, Mr Arnott, Mr Danford, they're out in the land. The farm press is replete with your broken promises.

Just to put this in very sharp focus, two years ago you wrote Elmer Buchanan, the then minister, saying, "Don't close the Ag office in Glengarry county and don't take away our Ag rep in Glengarry county." What is one of the first things you did? You closed the Ag office in your own county. You promise one thing before the election, beg the then government to spend money, and then in the first year of your administration, barefacedly, you did the very thing in your own home county that you begged Elmer Buchanan not to do.

Will you commit that the Ag offices in Avonmore and Renfrew and Picton and Napanee, to pick but four, will you promise that those agricultural offices serving good, hardworking farmers in eastern Ontario will not be closed during the course of your four-year administration?

Hon Mr Villeneuve: It's interesting that the honourable member would be so exercised as he is, because we promise one thing: to deliver efficient services to Ontario agriculture, to provide them with the good services that they have been accustomed to. You can wave all the paper you want, the honourable member for Renfrew North; we will not let the agricultural community down.

The reason I'm going to Japan is to accompany the federal minister on a trade mission where we will be selling Ontario products.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): New question, the leader of the third party.

Interjections.

The Speaker: Order. The leader of the third party has the floor.

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): It's sad, Mr Speaker, to see him swinging in the wind like that.

PRIVATIZATION OF ONTARIO HYDRO

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): I have a question for the Minister of Environment and Energy. There's been a lot of discussion over the last number of months about plans for Ontario Hydro. Does the minister support the privatization of Ontario Hydro?

Hon Brenda Elliott (Minister of Environment and Energy): What we have determined since we have formed the government, and certainly we were aware of that before we formed the government, was that in fact Ontario Hydro's rates have been rising into a dangerous level over the past few years. The first thing we did when we formed the government was to freeze the rates.

What we are working now to do is to look closely at Ontario Hydro to determine how we can make Ontario Hydro more competitive and thus reduce the rates to keep the business, to keep the companies that require competitive power prices in this province.

Mr Wildman: I asked a question about privatization and the minister answered a question about rates. The minister will know that the previous government froze Hydro rates and this government continued that freeze, but that's not what I was asking about.

Can the minister explain how decisions will be made with regard to the possible privatization of Ontario Hydro? Is the minister expecting to make public the report of Donald S. Macdonald later this month, and if the minister is prepared to make that public, is she confident that that report will provide the government with an unbiased view of what the future of Ontario Hydro should be to properly serve the consumers in Ontario?

Hon Mrs Elliott: Donald Macdonald has been asked to chair a committee to look at restructuring Ontario Hydro. He will be reporting to me at the end of this month with suggestions on how to change Ontario Hydro. To date, he has received over 200 submissions presenting various ideas on how to do that. The suggestions that he and his committee will bring forward will be presented to the public. At that point, we will be welcoming comments on those suggestions and then some time after that we will be coming forward with a government position.

Mr Wildman: Mr Speaker, I'll try again. I asked the minister two things. I asked her if she would make the report public—she didn't quite answer that—and I also asked her if she was confident that this would be an unbiased recommendation, considering the fact that Mr Macdonald is on the board of TransCanada PipeLines, a company that stands to gain from increased competition and privatization of Ontario Hydro, since they are in the manufacture of gas-fired plants that produce electricity and TransCanada PipeLines is a supplier to Hydro for non-utility generation.

I would quote from their annual report. It lists as one of the three main goals, "To increase substantially the scope and profitability of our energy management operations in North America." That is power generation.

Mr Macdonald is a walking energy conglomerate. Not only is he on the board of TransCanada PipeLines, he's

a member of the board of Alberta Energy Co, a major oil and gas company, and he's the chairman of Siemens Electric Ltd in Mississauga, which is a subsidiary of a German multinational that is reported to have sold over 50 turbines to utilities around the world.

The point is, doesn't Mr Macdonald have a conflict of interest in this matter? How are you going to get an unbiased report from a gentleman who's on the board of companies that will probably benefit if Hydro or parts of it are privatized?

Hon Mrs Elliott: I believe I did make clear in my second answer that we will make this report public. It will be a report from this committee and it will be, I believe, representative of the suggestions that have been brought forward to them and formulated in a way that will come to us as advice on how to move forward.

We took great care in determining the membership of this committee. We had a number of criteria we looked for. We looked for a few representatives from the municipal electrical; we looked for people who had regulatory experience; we looked for people who had experience in the gas industry, the electricity industry; we looked for people who could give us public policy advice. Mr Macdonald is a former federal Minister of Energy for the Liberal Party. I believe he has the qualifications, as do all members on that committee, to give us very good advice.

We were aware of Mr Macdonald's affiliations, as we are aware of the affiliations of all the people on that board. Mr Macdonald signed a letter of confidentiality with us at the outset. I'm very confident, and this confidence has been bolstered by the comments from people who have gone before this committee that they have received an excellent reception, have had very wise questions asked of them, and I am looking forward to that report because I believe it will be one of good advice to our government, with suggestions for change.

1430

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): I have a question to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, I'd like to tell you the story of two Ontario women. One is Elsie Lowndes from Hamilton. Ms Lowndes lives on a \$10,000-a-year disability pension from her employer since she lost a lung to cancer. After rent, her annual income is about \$6,000 a year. She pays \$113 a month for painkillers and other drugs that help keep her able to eat food.

The other woman is from Pickering. Diane doesn't want her last name used because she already has had enough difficulty coping with her situation. She gets a disability pension from Canada pension. After paying her mortgage and utilities, Diane has about \$90 a month for food, drugs and everything else. Her drugs for high blood pressure and chronic pain come to more than \$100 a month.

These two women have one thing in common. As of April 1, they no longer have a drug card that was provided to them by the municipalities under the special assistance and supplementary aid programs because your ministry has stopped paying its 80% share coverage of those programs.

Minister, before you start touting your Trillium drug benefit program, these women, before your extension of the Trillium plan, got Ontario drug benefit programs. They've lost that. They didn't have a minimum payment that you've now imposed on them because of your cuts. How do you expect these two women to continue with their necessary drugs when they do not have the money to pay your deductible?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Community and Social Services): First of all, I'm not going to deny that things may be difficult for some people, but clearly the rationale for our embarking upon the new drug program is to ensure that the program is available to more people. Certainly our government is concerned not only with people who are on special assistance right now but also with the working poor of the province. The intention of the program clearly is to make sure that an additional 140,000 people have access to the drug program.

We've tried very hard to protect programs for the disabled. You can see that we had no reduction in their benefit rates under the FBA, and we have also indicated that there'll be no reduction in services for the disabled community coming up.

Mr Cooke: That's exactly the question. Both of these women—I'll let you get your consultation from the Minister of Health.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Carry on. Question.

Mr Cooke: I'd like the minister to listen, Mr Speaker.

In answer to the question, the minister said there weren't any cuts to the disabled. Elsie has had a lung removed. She's 64 years old. One could say that she's disabled, and she's a senior. Diane is on a CPP disability pension. Both of these women were covered by the Ontario drug benefit program until you changed the rules on April 1. They're disabled. You've cut their benefits. You broke your promise. How can you justify that?

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: What I said was that the government protected the benefits of people under the FBA. Clearly what we have to do, and I don't think this is such a bad thing, is to try to make sure there's more access to the drug program. Yes, there is a \$2 copayment, but I believe what we're trying to do right now is to provide more and more service to more and more people in Ontario. I also indicated before that we're going to protect the services for the disabled.

Mr Cooke: I'd like to ask the minister what part of this puzzle he's having difficulty comprehending today. These two women do not have any money left at the end of the month to pay for their drugs and they do not have the money to pay the deductible. Before you made the cut, they were covered by the Ontario drug benefit program. Why did you—and I can't use the word in here, Mr Speaker, or I'd be thrown out, but why did you say that you would protect the disabled and in these two cases you've destroyed their lives.

Hon Mr Tsubouchi: I suppose that if we get past the rhetoric, we recognize the need to protect people from excessively high drug costs and we have a need to focus our limited resources in order to service as many people as possible. This is what the intention is. I can only

remind the member across the way again that this new program will in fact enlarge the program to allow close to 140,000 more people access to the drug program.

EDUCATION FINANCING

Mr Gerry Phillips (Scarborough-Agincourt): My question is to the Minister of Education. The property tax owners and taxpayers in my area have been shocked to hear that you've introduced a bill that will mean that they have to pay \$65 million of property tax directly to the province. The bill that you introduced here this week will force the Metropolitan Toronto School Board to give you a cheque for \$65 million, all from the property taxpayers of Metropolitan Toronto. This is at the very same time that your government has promised reform of property taxes here in Metropolitan Toronto. That's what they were expecting to hear, but what they heard was that you were going to force the Metro school board to write you a cheque for \$65 million, all from the property tax. How can you possibly justify putting a tax on the Metro property tax and taking \$65 million out of property tax to help you with your tax cut?

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I want to thank the honourable member opposite for the question, because it gives me an opportunity to straighten out what might be a misconception. The bill we tabled will not require a payment from the Metro school board to the provincial government. It will allow for the Metro board and this government to pursue an agreement whereby Metro will share in the reductions and finding the savings in our school system in Ontario. I'm sure the member opposite realizes that every student in Ontario deserves a chance for a high-quality education and every taxpayer in Ontario deserves a chance to get real value for their education dollar. That's what this government is up to, that's what this government wants to achieve, and I for one think it's high time.

Mr Phillips: You don't understand your own bill then, because as I read the bill, it does permit you to ask the Metro school board to write you a cheque for whatever you want it to be. They estimate it could be much more than \$65 million, but at least \$65 million. I don't think you have been forthcoming with the House in your answer, saying that the bill does not permit that. The bill specifically is designed so you can demand that cheque. I think that's the first thing you should clarify to the people of Ontario, that your answer was not particularly—

Interjection: Careful.

Mr Phillips: I'll be very careful, because I cannot say that you were deliberately misleading. But your answer was not completely forthcoming. This does permit you to write a cheque; it is your intention to demand that. I want to once again ask you very directly, recognizing that the property tax system is broken—that's what you've said. You've said that you were going to fix it, but the only bill you've introduced is a bill that permits you to demand a cheque to take property taxes from the hard-working people of Metropolitan Toronto to fund your tax cut. I want to ask you very directly two things: Does this bill permit that and, secondly, how can you possibly

justify taking \$65 million from the property taxpayers of Metropolitan Toronto to partially fund your tax cut?

Hon Mr Snobelen: I know that the member opposite, like every honourable member, would not want to misinform the public at all and so I'll take the words out of his second question. Yes, there is permission. That's a long way from demanding. That's a long way from requiring, sir. There's a world of difference between those words and that's why that legislation says what it says. We will negotiate with boards and we will do it to find equity in funding in education in Ontario. That's what the people of Ontario expect, and that's what they'll get.

1440

APPOINTMENTS PROCESS

Ms Frances Lankin (Beaches-Woodbine): My question is to the Premier. I've been reviewing some of your recent appointments to agencies, boards and commissions, and it's sort of interesting. Over the last four months at least 18 of those appointments are ex-Tory candidates or ex-Tory campaign managers. There's a disturbing trend here. Mr Premier, let me give you just a couple of examples. I think one of the most shocking appointments that was made recently—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Order.

Ms Lankin: I think the members opposite should quieten down and listen to this one because I think you'll find this shocking, too. Let me tell you about Daniel Callaghan. He was appointed to the College of Midwives of Ontario. He appeared before the committee and when he was asked about his interest or his expertise in midwifery, Callaghan replied that he simply wanted an appointment, preferably in the health field, and because he was currently out of work he had some time on his hands. But the one credential he forgot to mention to the committee was the reason why he had time on his hands. He was the defeated Tory candidate in Renfrew North in the 1995 election.

Let me give you a second example: Blaine Tyndall. He was appointed to the City of Windsor Police Services Board. Mr Tyndall has no background in local policing issues and in fact, Mr Premier, he doesn't even live in the city of Windsor. His credentials: He was the Tory candidate in Windsor-Riverside in the June election and he too was defeated.

The Speaker: Would you put your question, please.

Ms Lankin: Mr Premier, how can you defend these blatant political appointments when you said before the election, and I quote to you, "To prevent the appointment of unqualified persons for their political reasons," you support the concept of minimum standards of experience of expertise for board members. Mr Premier, please explain this.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I would indicate that the political appointment process, or the appointment of people to agencies, boards and commissions, is always one of those areas that could be contentious and that a lot of people will look at. That's why we have the committee, of course, to review, something that I think was brought in perhaps by the NDP, and we supported the process that you brought in.

You mentioned one appointment on midwifery. I believe that appointment was to be a lay appointment. Some of the positions that were set up under your criteria were to be lay appointments, and I believe that appointment was to fill a lay appointment position that was there. That's my recollection, but the committee is reviewing that.

I would also say to the member that you will find there are, on any basis you want to do it—party membership, votes—far more Tories in the province today than there ever were and far more Tories than you will ever find any percentage of the appointments that would be made. I have to tell you that it would take this government 42 years to ever match the amount of political patronage appointments your party made in five.

Ms Lankin: Well, Mr Premier, perhaps the facts would belie that. You're the one who said you wanted a minimum standard of expertise and experience. An unemployed used car salesman from the past, an ex-Tory candidate, contacted by the political staff in the Minister of Health's office, what's his minimum expertise and experience for the College of Midwives?

Let me go through some of the other appointments. Maybe we can see what standards you are using. Evelyn Dodds, two-time Tory candidate, appointed to the Social Assistance Review Board; Dan MacDonald, to the Social Assistance Review Board, Mulroney organizer and past Tory candidate; Maeve Quaid to the Social Assistance Review Board, past Tory candidate; Pauline Browes, to the Environmental Assessment Board, former Tory cabinet minister; John Best, to the provincial parole board, Bob Runciman's campaign manager; David Nash, to the Ontario Casino Corp, Tory campaign manager; Peter Vice, who was appointed to the Regional Municipality of Ottawa-Carleton Police Services Board, past Tory campaign manager; John Rossetti, to the Gaming Control Commission, past member of executives of various Progressive Conservative riding associations; Douglas Maund, to the Orangeville Police Services Board, chief of staff to Perrin Beatty and political friend of your Minister of Health, who also worked for Perrin Beatty.

Mr Premier, before the election, you said that appointments to agencies, boards and commissions should be based on the principles of sound turnaround management and expertise and not a pork-barrelling carousel. Mr Premier, you have broken your pledge to the people of the province on this issue. Will you make a commitment to us today to stop these blatant political patronage appointments?

Hon Mr Harris: We, of course, have not broken our pledge to the people.

Ms Lankin: You said you were different. You set the standard. Live up to it.

Hon Mr Harris: Well, I asked them to bring me in the NDP appointments, and the wheelbarrows can't get here in time. If you would like, I can pass them on to you.

I think you will find, of the appointments we have made to date, there are probably far more NDP re-appointments than there are new ones. You will find in the percentage of appointments that the Progressive Conservatives are in the vast, significant minority of all

the appointments that are there. I don't think if somebody's qualified they should be ruled ineligible because at some point in time they may have supported any of the three political parties.

I can tell you that I think the member, looking over the five-year record, now campaigning for leadership, has a lot of nerve inviting public scrutiny of your record of the last five years. I'm surprised you would want to do that.

MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AND COMMERCIAL RELATIONS

Mr Ed Doyle (Wentworth East): Today my question is to the Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations, the Honourable Norm Sterling. I wonder, Mr Sterling, now that the OPSEU strike is over, if you'd like to inform the House how the province is serving the needs of the business community in light of the fact that many of them have suffered some business delays in starting their businesses, as well as difficulties they may have encountered in concluding important business deals.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): As you know, during the strike, many of my branches were closed down. I'm pleased to tell the members of the House and the business community that my ministry's companies branch, which was fully operational on Monday—we were back in business, the normal over-the-counter registration services were being accepted at a great rate. We set up extra stations, we set up different methods, different lines, drop boxes, for those people who had to have a date stamped on it. We worked extra hours to make certain that everybody was served on the first day who needed to be served. We're very proud of our management and the OPSEU workers who got back to work and did their job right away.

Mr Doyle: I understand as well from a member of my own constituency that some offices were extremely busy on Monday, as you have said, and that there were some delays, so I wonder if it's possible if you could give us a prediction on how long these delays may go on.

Hon Mr Sterling: We expect to be very busy for the next two or three weeks, catching up on some of the work that was let go during that period of time. The first day that we were open we had over 1,000 business names registered, as well as 450 incorporations take place, which is an abnormally large number of registrations to take place on a single day.

We're going to talk about the Personal Property Security Act this afternoon. When that's up and running, we'll be accepting tens of thousands of registrations, but we're getting the system back on track. We ask the public to be a little bit patient and perhaps they will have to wait a little bit longer, but we see that we'll be out of this in a very, very short period of time because of the extra effort that my employees are putting forward.

1450

YOUTH EMPLOYMENT

Mrs Sandra Pupatello (Windsor-Sandwich): I mentioned earlier how thrilled we were to have an announcement that meant a victory for the youth in

Ontario. I do have a question to direct to the Minister of Education and Training today. Perhaps the minister missed our tour of Ontario, but as you know, the students across Ontario were in dire straits to hear the kinds of programs that would be introduced. We know that the programs had been cancelled. We knew you had a very busy couple of weeks to reintroduce programs and come back today to announce that in fact you're going to hire more youth throughout the summer months.

I'd like to get the assurance from the minister today that even though you're taking \$3 million out of the program, you are going to allow the youth of Ontario to prepare themselves to pay the increased tuition that they'll be facing come September and that the youth programs you've introduced today are going to take care of that for the youth.

Hon John Snobelen (Minister of Education and Training): I want to thank the honourable member opposite for the question. Indeed, this is a good-news announcement. There are thousands more jobs for our young people in the province of Ontario, the young people who need those work opportunities, who need them not only to pay for their college and university tuitions and other living expenses, but also to get those work habits that they need to get on with their careers in the province. So I think this is excellent news: thousands more jobs for young people in Ontario at a cost that's a real value for the taxpayers.

Mrs Pupatello: Let's take an example of one of these programs then, since we've got an assurance that you really are going to do more for the youth. The Environmental Youth Corps, as an example, one of the programs you announced today, they had a budget last year of \$10.1 million. You say that you're going to have their number of jobs for this part of the program, at 3,500, it's going to be increased to 6,200. But you've also told them about the length of weeks. Last year it was 14 to 16 weeks, but this year it's 10 to 12 weeks. Now, how are we going to have the moneys being spread around? It's clear you're going to have every student make less so that you can come back at the end of the program and say, "Look how many more students we've hired." I'd like some kind of an explanation, because we don't expect a minister to come to the House and fudge the numbers.

Hon Mr Snobelen: Thank you for the question. I think it's a good one. We want to make sure that our summer programs have some commonality, that they represent about the same time period, so temporally we've made some changes. But I want to tell you that the core change is this: We are looking to work with the private sector to provide these jobs and to help fund these jobs, because we think, as I said in my statement earlier, that these are not only work opportunities for young people, but they're of benefit to employers across the province too.

It's certainly to their benefit to have young people employed on a summer basis and to develop in the youth of Ontario the kind of skills that will be necessary for their ongoing careers. So I think this announcement's good news all the way across. It's good news for employers, it's good news for young people and it's

another example of doing more with less, of leveraging those tax dollars and making a big difference for young people in Ontario. We're proud of it.

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Tony Silipo (Dovercourt): I have a question to the Premier. During the time that we were the government, we embraced an open and public process in terms of the budget process that allowed people across the province to come forward and give their views on what should be dealt with through the budget, not just through the finance committee hearings, but indeed through the finance minister's own pre-budget consultations.

Premier, your government turned its back on this process when you scrapped this very same process. We know that the finance minister is meeting with groups, but he's meeting in very private meetings. This morning, we in the NDP caucus began our own process of talking with people and hearing what people really are concerned about. I want to tell you that we intend to continue across the province the meetings that we started here this morning in Toronto, bringing people together to talk about the real options that are in front of this province.

We heard this morning, in just a short one-and-a-half-hour discussion, that people are really concerned, they're really worried, they're fearful. They're worried about the long-term deficit that you will be creating, the increasing poverty that will come about as a result of your actions, the abandonment of the environment, a loss of standards for social services and the loss of jobs which your fiscal plan will be responsible for. Given the good sense that exists out there among people from all walks of life, why have you allowed your finance minister to abandon this process of open consultation with people before making up your mind about what budget decisions you will reflect in the budget later this spring?

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): On February 5, the Minister of Finance appeared before the standing committee on finance and economic affairs to kick off the pre-budget consultation process. In addition, the Minister of Finance is meeting, as did the former Minister of Finance, with more than 40 groups and associations—representatives from business, labour, the agriculture community, high-tech industry. The parliamentary assistant to the Minister of Finance, Isabel Bassett, is meeting with a variety of sectors. MPPs are consulting with members. We invite input, over and above the committee, from all members of the Legislature and from all of those concerned.

I think they have been probably more extensive than any that were held by the New Democratic Party. Consultations actually are still ongoing, continuing right through to April 23. I might add that there are caucus consultations and I would hope that you're having those too. The only thing that has surprised me is that in the process that you and the member for Beaches-Woodbine have kicked off I don't know where the other two leadership candidates are in your leadership tour to hear other submissions. But I want to say we would welcome your submissions, and from the other two leadership candidates if

they want to embark on their own tour. We'd welcome that input.

Mr Silipo: You can continue to let your arrogance flow as much as you want. You can try to paint this as a leadership contest all you want. The reality is that we are providing the vehicle for public discussion which you and your Minister of Finance are not doing.

I have to say that I found it very interesting. If the Premier thinks that this is just another futile exercise, why was it that we had officials from the Ministry of Finance sitting in on the discussion? Maybe it was because it's the only way that the Ministry of Finance is going to hear what the public really thinks out there, because certainly they're not hearing through discussions that the Minister of Finance is holding, which are being held behind closed doors. When the Minister of Finance came to the budget committee, he didn't provide us any information about the options that they were looking at.

1500

Is that all happening, Premier, because you really have just made up your mind about the tax cut, about all the job cuts, about everything else that you are doing and you have no room left to listen to whatever it is that people have to say out there?

This morning, when you were asked about the Embarrass Harris Campaign, your response was that you tend to respond more to logical, sensible arguments. Let me tell you, there were lots of logical, sensible arguments in the meeting that I was at this morning and there are lots of logical, sensible arguments out there, but you're not going to hear them unless you and your ministers are out there listening to those discussions. I want to ask you again, why will you not reinstate the open public discussions that the previous Minister of Finance had for four years in this province, which give people an opportunity to talk to you and hopefully talk good sense to you through that process?

Hon Mr Harris: I guess you're talking about the process that led to 32 tax hikes. Is that the process? Is this the process that you heard from that encouraged the Minister of Finance to run four \$10-billion deficits in a row? Is this the process where the Minister of Finance heard that he should run up \$100 billion in debt? Because if that's the process, we're not interested in that process. We're interested in hearing, quite frankly, I might say, from all of the people.

I might tell you that we did listen for four years. We put together a proposal. We campaigned on it in what might be called the ultimate consultation where the people said: "We'd like our taxes cut so we can be competitive. We'd like to spend more efficiently. We'd like a budget, the first one introduced by the new government, that brings us on a path to fully balance our budget." I might add that we are indeed committed by virtue of our campaign promises and commitments, as you all indicate, to do just what we asked the people to elect us to do. So we are delivering on that, and within that framework we welcome all opinion and all input. But if you're asking us to deliver the kind of budgets you delivered with tax hikes, job losses, bigger deficits, higher debt, more people on welfare, we're not interested in that.

APPOINTMENTS PROCESS

Mr Garry J. Guzzo (Ottawa-Rideau): My question is for the Premier. Mr Premier, earlier today you were asked by the member for Beaches-Woodbine with regard to certain appointments made by this administration, and in particular Mr Callaghan's name was mentioned. Having had the opportunity to campaign with Mr Callaghan and meet him during the election campaign, I would wonder if the Premier might like to expand to some extent on this man's background and his qualifications.

Hon Michael D. Harris (Premier): I might add that it is, I think, rewarding and interesting that finally we get a question that comes from the ebb and flow of the debate in the House as opposed to the setup, scripted questions that normally come forward. Might I congratulate the member, because lots of times people at home say: "Don't they listen? Is this all a setup? Is it all for that?"

I am pleased because, as I indicated in response to the member for Beaches-Woodbine, this matter had gone before the committee, and it's important that you understand that the College of Midwives, that college set up by the NDP, is set up with seven to eight midwives and then five to seven public members. The criteria set out by the NDP were this: Public members cannot be members of a regulatory college; they cannot be midwives; they can't be any other health professional. They are to represent the public interest and should be open-minded in regard to the profession.

I am supposing that these were the criteria that just before the election prompted the NDP to appoint to the very same college Lucie Paquin, constituency assistant to Len Wood, NDP MPP for Cochrane. That was on May 15, just about when the polls said the government and that job may disappear for Lucy Pacquin; or Abby Pollonetsky, a director of the New Democratic Party of Canada, on May 4. So I am assuming that the NDP were looking for laypeople, non-professionals, non-medical background, to fill those criteria, and indeed we believe Mr Callaghan fills those criteria better than these appointments.

Mr Guzzo: My supplementary question would be to the Premier. I'd like to know, Mr Premier, if you have some more people of that quality and qualifications that I support and have recognized in Mr Callaghan from eastern Ontario, and any appointments in the offing, people of that nature.

Hon Mr Harris: I want to say that I agree with you on Mr Callaghan's qualifications, as did the committee. It's a matter of public record, his community services and experiences. He also put on the record his sensitivity to the subject of birthing, having two very personal experiences that are now a matter of record that I don't think anybody would particularly want to contradict.

I want to assure the member and again congratulate him on coming forth with these spontaneous questions, because it really helps the image of all members of all parties of the House to get away from this viewpoint that a lot of the public have that question period is a fix and they really know the answers or they don't really want to know. Let me assure the member there are many very

talented, qualified people coming forward. I want to indicate that many of them are willing to serve for \$1 a year and many of them are serving in that capacity, in unprecedented numbers. Some may have had previous political experience, but that of course is not the primary criterion.

SOCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR THE DISABLED

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, you have now basically acknowledged that you are going to change the definition of "disability" and that this change is going to come in a short little while here in Ontario. We're talking about individuals who are permanently unemployable who are disabled. We're talking about cancer patients in remission, people with psychiatric conditions, people with heart conditions. This category is now being reviewed by your ministry with an intent to move these people out of this system into the welfare system, so someone would go from \$900 a month to \$560 a month once you've made your changes. It's going to save you millions of dollars on the backs of the disabled.

Minister, can you assure us today that once you have completed your redefinition of "disability" in Ontario, not one single person who is now receiving disability pension will be ineligible as a result of your changing and forcing them on to welfare for a lower rate? Can you simply give that assurance to the House today?

Hon David H. Tsubouchi (Minister of Community and Social Services): Sometimes it's nice if the honourable member across the way wouldn't engage in the practice of setting up straw men so he can knock them down. I have not acknowledged any change in any definition of "disabled." The honourable member is starting with an assumption and clearly his starting point is incorrect.

As I've said to this particular member before, and clearly in the House as well, this is one of the reasons why we have this advisory committee, so we can have consultation with the disabled community. These are the groups of the caregivers. We have an obligation right now, and we are working right now with the disabled community to find out what their needs are. This particular member keeps on coming up over and over again with these assumptions and he considers them to be true and self-evident, but they're not. He's got to start with a real and true premise.

PETITIONS

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE PENSIONS

Mr John Gerretsen (Kingston and The Islands): I have a petition here that's addressed to the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Bill 26 exempts the government as an employer from key legislation governing pensions in Ontario; and

"Whereas employees of the Ontario government have been stripped of their right to access pension security, a right that other workers in the province have; and

"Whereas this represents the theft of hundreds of millions of dollars in pension benefits from working people; and

"Whereas as a result thousands of workers who face being laid off in the coming months could be forced into poverty;

"We, the following undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to reinstate the rights removed by schedule L of Bill 26."

I proudly affix my signature to it.

1510

COMMENTS OF MINISTER RESPONSIBLE FOR WOMEN'S ISSUES

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have a petition with about 150 signatures from people in my riding and across Ontario.

"Whereas six women present at a meeting held by the minister responsible for women's issues, Dianne Cunningham, at her constituency office on October 25, 1995, agree that they heard the minister state, 'Within the context of this government, you need to understand that groups or agencies that are seen not to be working with this government, providing an oppositional voice...will be audited and their funding eliminated'; and

"Whereas the minister responsible for women's issues denies having made this statement; and

"Whereas the minister's credibility in all future actions and statements will be clouded by these discrepancies,

"Therefore we, the undersigned, request that the government establish a legislative committee to determine whether the minister responsible for women's issues abused her authority as a minister of the crown by making threatening and intimidating remarks at the meeting described above."

I affix my signature to this petition.

PRIVATIZATION OF PUBLIC SERVICES

Mr Toby Barrett (Norfolk): I have a petition to the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Ontario government plans to sell off public services to corporations which will run them for profit; and

"Whereas after the corporate takeover it will be strictly user-pay for these services we now depend on; and

"Whereas our clean air and water standards and worker safety rules are being relaxed because corporations don't like rules that interfere with profits; and

"Whereas privatization is being sold as a way to save tax dollars, even though large companies pay little or no taxes while individual Canadians pay most of the total tax bill; and

"Whereas Bill 7 was introduced in the interests of facilitating its privatization agenda by stripping public sector workers of their rights to retain fair working conditions when services are transferred or privatized,

"We, the following citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to abandon the sell-off of Ontario public services and reinstate successor rights for public service employees."

I affix my name to this petition.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads:

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation is intent on reducing northern winter road maintenance services; and

"Whereas such downgrading places the lives of northern residents at undue and unnecessary risk,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to disallow these reductions in service and to guarantee that winter roads across northern regions of the province receive the necessary maintenance to ensure the safe passage of drivers."

I have affixed my name to that petition as well.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): Here I have a petition from a number of people from around the city of Toronto, initiated by Paul Daniels. The petition reads:

"Whereas Mike Harris's Conservative government of Ontario is planning to destroy the present system of rent control;

"Whereas Mike Harris and the Conservative Party made no mention of scrapping rent control during the election campaign of 1995 or in the Common Sense Revolution document;

"Whereas a number of Conservative candidates in ridings with high tenant populations campaigned during the 1995 election on a platform of protecting the current rent control system;

"Whereas the government has consulted with special-interest groups representing landlords and developers while cutting funding to organizations representing the 3.5 million tenants in Ontario;

"Whereas although all renters will suffer, seniors and others on fixed incomes will suffer particular hardship if rent controls are abolished,

"We, the undersigned, call upon the Legislature of Ontario to stop the attack on the 3.5 million tenants of this province."

I sign the petition.

TAX REDUCTION

Mr Bernard Grandmaitre (Ottawa East): I have a petition addressed to the Legislature of Ontario.

"The government of Ontario is planning to implement tax cuts that will benefit well-off people while at the same time they have cut incomes to the poor. 46% of Ontario families make less than \$35,000 a year but will get only 7.3% of the benefits of the proposed tax cuts (or about \$462 a year). Families with total incomes over \$95,000 a year make up only 9.2% of all Ontario families, but they will get 32.7% of the benefits. In these tough times it is unconscionable that the poor will go hungry while the wealthy are given more."

I have signed this petition.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I've got a petition addressed to Transportation Minister Al Palladini and to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario with respect to legislation proposed that will cost many towns their bus service.

"Bus companies are currently required to provide service for smaller towns as a condition of being given the rights to high-profit routes and charter markets. Minister Palladini's plan to deregulate will eliminate all conditions and requirements. As a result, hundreds of smaller communities like ours are going to lose bus service.

"Minister, people in smaller towns and villages need bus service just as much as people in big cities."—like Toronto—"We depend upon buses to visit friends and family, to get to appointments in nearby towns, to ship our Christmas presents and to receive our repair parts. The undersigned call upon the members of the Legislative Assembly to oppose bus deregulation and the elimination of our bus service."

That's signed by just numbers and numbers and numbers of people. I have affixed my signature.

SCARBOROUGH GENERAL HOSPITAL

Mr Dan Newman (Scarborough Centre): I have a petition today signed by a number of residents from the city of Scarborough. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislature of Ontario:

"Whereas the recommendations of the Metropolitan Toronto District Health Council to close inpatient paediatric beds, the special care nursery and the burn unit at Scarborough General Hospital resulting in significantly reduced access to paediatric, newborn and burn care for a large geographic area of Scarborough; and

"Whereas the paediatric unit, special care nursery and burn unit at Scarborough General Hospital provide very cost-efficient, quality care,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislature of Ontario to:

"(1) Continue pediatric services, including inpatient pediatric beds,

"(2) Continue special care nursery services,

"(3) Continue and combine Metropolitan Toronto's burn care

"At Scarborough General Hospital!"

I am pleased to affix my signature to this petition.

JUNIOR KINDERGARTEN

Mr Peter North (Elgin): I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"We, the undersigned, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"That junior kindergarten as it stands in the current public school system remain as a level of education for our children, governed by the provincial government,

"Therefore, we, the people of Elgin county, request that the House refrain from cancelling junior kindergarten as proposed by the current Harris government. We request that junior kindergarten remain as part of the public school system."

It's signed by a number of people in my riding.

HIGHWAY SAFETY

Mr David Ramsay (Timiskaming): "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Transportation has had 12.8 kilometres of Highway 11 between Temagami and south of Highway 64 turnoff reconstructed during October to April 1995; and

"Whereas the contractor for this project is Allan Cook Construction of Barrie, Ontario; and

"Whereas the condition of this highway during construction was deplorable and caused considerable damage to vehicles driving north and south along this" portion of highway "and the lack of maintenance during the construction period caused an unsafe environment for vehicle traffic from the south and north who had to use Highway 11 as the only route for residents, businesses and tourists in the area; and

"Whereas the length of time for this construction to be completed was too long of a time frame and being the months of April, May, June, July, August and September (1995) afforded the most favourable weather for the necessary construction work to be completed,

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to disallow a similar situation of road construction to occur in the future and to guarantee a safe and good passable roadway during any further road construction for the residents of northern Ontario, transportation vehicles of goods and services, and tourists to and from northern Ontario."

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Mr Howard Hampton (Rainy River): I have a petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Transportation Minister Al Palladini is proposing legislation that will cost many towns their bus service.

"Bus companies are currently required to provide service for smaller towns as a condition of being given the rights to high-profit routes and charter markets. Minister Palladini's plan to deregulate will eliminate all conditions and requirements. As a result, hundreds of smaller communities like ours will lose bus service.

"Minister, people in smaller towns need bus service just as much as people in big cities. We depend upon buses to visit friends and family, to get to appointments in nearby towns, to ship our Christmas presents and to receive our repair parts. The undersigned call upon the members of the Legislative Assembly to oppose bus deregulation and the elimination of our bus service."

This petition is signed by 15 residents of the province. I affix my signature as well, as I agree with this petition.

ST JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Common Sense Revolution states that a Conservative government will not cut health care; and

"Whereas during the 1995 election campaign the Conservatives clearly promised to defend the health care system by protecting ministry funding, stating in a

campaign backgrounder, 'There will be no cuts to health care funding by the Harris government,' and calling this their first and most important commitment,

"Therefore we, the undersigned, call on the Minister of Health to reject all recommendations put forward by the Hamilton task force related to any hospital closures in Hamilton-Wentworth, and in particular St Joseph's Hospital at 50 Charlton Street East in Hamilton."

I am pleased to affix my signature to the petition.

TAX REDUCTION

Ms Marilyn Churley (Riverdale): I have petitions here from well over, I think in this set, 200 people.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to abandon, reduce or delay the provincial government's proposed 30% tax reduction in order to maintain needed funding and services for the two million people of Metro Toronto."

I affix my signature to this petition.

1520

FAMILY SUPPORT OFFICES

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): The people of northwestern Ontario continue to express great support for the family support plan and the need for the regional offices to be maintained. It reads:

"We, being residents and taxpayers of Ontario, hereby wish to notify you that we oppose the centralization of the family support plan and in particular the closure of the Thunder Bay branch of the family support plan for the following reasons," which I read into Hansard yesterday.

It summarizes by saying, "We hereby respectfully request that you give consideration to our concerns and reject any proposal for the closure of the Thunder Bay branch."

I've got over 1,000 signatures here, and I'm proud to sign my own name as well.

ONTARIO PUBLIC SERVICE PENSIONS

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I've got a petition to the Honourable Lieutenant Governor and the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas Bill 26 exempts the government as an employer from key legislation governing pensions in Ontario; and

"Whereas employees of the Ontario government have been stripped of their right to access pension security, a right that other workers in Ontario have; and

"Whereas this represents the theft of hundreds of millions of dollars in pension benefits from working people; and

"Whereas as a result thousands of workers who face being laid off in the coming months could be forced into poverty;

"We, the following undersigned citizens of Ontario, beg leave to petition the Parliament of Ontario to reinstate the rights removed by schedule L of Bill 26."

That signed by Barbara LeBlanc of Welland, by Marielle Labrie of Welland, and hundreds and hundreds of others.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): "We, the undersigned, believe that rent control abolition would lead to a steep rise in rents due to the persistent shortage of affordable housing in Hamilton-Wentworth. Tenants, who are among the most affected by ongoing mass layoffs, wage cuts and hiring freezes, and senior citizens on fixed incomes will suffer greatly if rent controls are abolished. We are not in favour of the proposed abolition of rent controls by the provincial government."

I urge this House to reject any attempt to do so, and I'm pleased to sign my name to the petition.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have yet another petition, this time from people around the Hamilton area, who sent this petition to me as the housing critic for the NDP. It reads:

"Whereas security of tenure or the right to remain in our homes is a basic need of all humans, and whereas uncontrolled rent increases force many tenants from their homes for both economic and other reasons, and as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Premier of Ontario have both expressed publicly their desire to abolish rent control;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to protect the security of tenure of Ontario tenants by ensuring that rent controls remain in effect in this province."

I've signed the petition.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr Michael Gravelle (Port Arthur): The residents of public housing continue to be very concerned and apprehensive about the government's intention to privatize, and I have another petition saying:

"Whereas the Ministry of Housing has indicated an intent to privatize public housing units and intensify the housing crisis in Ontario; and

"Whereas all Ontarians have a basic right to fair and affordable shelter; and

"Whereas such privatization will cause financial hardship and insecurity;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to disallow the privatization of public housing units and to ensure that existing structures are adequately maintained."

I am pleased to add my signature to it.

RENT REGULATION

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have yet another petition, this time from the people of Windsor. It reads:

"Whereas security of tenure or the right to remain in our homes is a basic need of all humans, and whereas uncontrolled rent increases force many tenants from their homes for both economic and other reasons, and as the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing and the Premier of Ontario have both expressed publicly their desire to abolish rent control;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly to protect the security of tenure of Ontario tenants by

ensuring that rent controls remain in effect in this province."

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE
ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr Barrett from the standing committee on regulations and private bills presented the following report and moved its adoption:

Your committee recommends that the following bill be not reported:

Bill Pr42, An Act respecting the City of Ottawa.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PERSONAL PROPERTY SECURITY
AMENDMENT ACT, 1996
LOI DE 1996 MODIFIANT LA LOI
SUR LES SÛRETÉS MOBILIÈRES

Mr Sterling moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 35, An Act to amend the Personal Property Security Act / Projet de loi 35, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les sûretés mobilières.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

MINISTRY OF NATURAL RESOURCES
STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 1996
LOI DE 1996 MODIFIANT DES LOIS
EN CE QUI CONCERNE
LE MINISTÈRE DES RICHESSES NATURELLES

Mr Hodgson moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 36, An Act to amend certain acts administered by the Ministry of Natural Resources / Projet de loi 36, Loi modifiant certaines lois appliquées par le ministère des Richesses naturelles.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

EDUCATION AMENDMENT ACT
(CO-OPERATION AMONG BOARDS), 1996LOI DE 1996 MODIFIANT
LA LOI SUR L'ÉDUCATION
(COLLABORATION ENTRE CONSEILS)

Mr Wildman moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 37, An Act to amend the Education Act to require co-operation among boards / Projet de loi 37, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'éducation pour exiger la collaboration entre les conseils.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried. Any remarks?

Mr Bud Wildman (Algoma): The bill amends the Education Act to require coterminous school boards to

cooperate in the provision and purchase and use of goods and services, goods such as supplies and equipment and facilities, services such as transportation services, educational, administrative and operational support services.

Nothing in this bill infringes upon rights under collective agreements.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): Mr Speaker, I believe I have unanimous consent to call as the first order of the day the amendment to the Personal Property Security Act, which I just introduced, and that I have unanimous consent to call that for second and third reading today as well.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Agreed? Agreed.

PERSONAL PROPERTY SECURITY AMENDMENT ACT, 1996 LOI DE 1996 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES SÛRETÉS MOBILIÈRES

Mr Sterling moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 35, An Act to amend the Personal Property Security Act / Projet de loi 35, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les sûretés mobilières.

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): At the outset, I'd like to thank the critic for the Liberal Party and the critic for the New Democratic Party for going to their caucuses and explaining this bill to their caucuses prior to the introduction of the bill. I was glad to share it with them prior to the introduction because of their understanding that it was necessary to have quick passage of this to protect some small businesses and some creditors in our province.

I'd like to outline the basis of the bill. Under the Personal Property Security Act, it's necessary to re-register an instrument on its termination date, and you have 30 days in which to do that. Because the computers were shut down during the recent strike, people who had instruments that came to an end during that period of time or just immediately prior to it did not have the opportunity to re-register their instrument. This meant that their lien against a particular chattel became unperfected, as they say in the legal business, meaning that it no longer was a charge against that particular chattel or piece of personal property.

The problem with that, of course, is that all of a sudden the system gets out of sync and that those who would have another lien against that property or against all of the assets of a business would get out of sync with what was actually intended by the people who are conducting the business around that particular piece of property.

1530

In the case of liens which were supposed to be re-registered during that period of time, what we are proposing to do in this legislation is to give the people who should have re-registered during the shutdown five days to re-register those instruments. If they re-register those

instruments within those five days, their effective date in terms of their protection will go back to the date when their lien terminated against that particular chattel.

The second area that is of importance as well is when a small business person has sold perhaps a computer and taken a lien on that computer to secure the amount of money left owing on the computer. Under the Personal Property Security Act, you have 10 days in order to register that lien to get the first charge against that particular computer. If you don't register it within 10 days but register it later, you become second to some of the other liens that would be against perhaps all of the assets of that particular business. It's common, for instance, for a bank to take a lien against all of the chattels or all of the property of a particular business. So by not being able to register the lien within 10 days, the small business man who has sold the computer to that business has lost his priority to the bank. That would happen, and that would show up particularly in the case of a bankruptcy.

In the third instance, there is a requirement to discharge a lien within 30 days of being paid off, and of course people have not had that opportunity to register that discharge when the computers have been shut down. This legislation will give people five days to register discharges of liens against chattels in the future. We don't know yet when the computers are going to be up. It takes a considerable amount of time to get the computers back on stream. The legislation indicates that I will put a notice in the Ontario Gazette when those computers are ready to start up again, and from the initial day there will be four days after that to make a total of five, or the additional day plus nine in order to register the first lien against the smaller chattel in the second case that I indicated.

That is the basic guts of the legislation. The need for us to pass this quickly is in case of a company going bankrupt. There is good law and there is also arguable law that when a person or a business goes bankrupt the law freezes as of that day. If there were a bankruptcy today or yesterday, for instance, we might be stuck with the old regime of priorities that had been skewed by the fact that the registry system wasn't working during the strike. Once this law is passed, then the new regime will be in place and people will have the opportunity to correct the priority dates or the priority of the various liens against the chattels.

I'd be pleased to answer any questions of the members here and again want to thank them for their cooperation in putting this situation back in place.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Questions or comments?

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): It's my pleasure to reply to the minister and to reiterate that we are pleased to join you and the third party, I understand, in supporting the swift passage of this bill, the Personal Property Security Amendment Act, so that it might benefit all the lenders, the small businesses and individuals the minister has spoken to.

This is a small example of, when someone with your influence and experience and power within cabinet introduces a bill, how swiftly these things can be done, and perhaps could suggest that if the minister and I and

the critic for the third party were to get together, we could probably run this whole province more efficiently. I wish you well with your bill.

Mr Gilles Bisson (Cochrane South): I have a couple of questions of the minister, but prior to that I would just say that this is an example where many people don't understand that at times in the Legislature we don't fight on issues just because we want to. We decide that many times in legislation there are things that we need to do, that we have to do, all of us, for the good of Ontario, and we do that. But at times we do disagree and we have very strong argument on that. I think people need to recognize this is not one of those times.

One of the two questions I have for you is simply this: In regard to the five days' notification, I take it that it will only be published in the Gazette and it will be up to individuals to find out what is required of them to reregister their liens. Is that the only mechanism by which you're going to do that?

The other question is that you're saying it is a problem to start up and to get back up on line the computer network system itself. I understand the same problem exists with the Ministry of Transportation presently, where it's having difficulty trying to get the computers back on line again. Understanding something about computers—I wouldn't say I'm expert, but I understand a fair amount about networking—what is the difficulty? Maybe you can shed a bit of light on that. I need to know, is it a question that there's a problem with the system or is it just that the equipment is so old they're having some problems trying to warm it up once again?

The Acting Speaker: Any further questions or comments? If not, Minister, you have two minutes.

Hon Mr Sterling: I thank you for your support of the bill. The official notification will be occurring in the Gazette. We will be making every attempt to publicize the dates in every other forum that we can, including that I will come into this Legislature and indicate the date here in this Legislature, as well as doing a number of other things in trying to get to those people who would be involved with the small business community. We're going to be in touch with the Canadian Federation of Independent Business people. We're going to be in touch with the bar.

Mr Bisson: The OFL?

Hon Mr Sterling: If the OFL wants to find out; I didn't realize that they were in the securing of business. But I ask the members, if they have suggestions as to how I can propagate this particular date, I would be pleased to receive their comments.

I can't really comment on the problem with the computers. This was a first instance. I guess it's reflected by the fact that the act never contemplated this kind of situation. However, I think it has pointed out a weakness in our computer systems in government and the fact that they can't be shut down easily and started easily. I'd have to refer you to Mr Johnson, who is the head of Management Board. They fall under him. Again, thank you very much for your support.

1540

The Acting Speaker: Any further debate?

Mr Peter Kormos (Welland-Thorold): I want to thank the minister for introducing this bill. As the former

leader of the party graced me with the position of critic for consumer and commercial relations—and it was something like being the Maytag repairman—I'm grateful for any legislation that comes from the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations—this is the second one—because you see, it gives me an opportunity to respond as a critic.

I was assured, of course, at the time I was given this critic's position that it would be extremely high profile, that I'd have an opportunity to address a number of issues here in the Legislature, that I'd be engaging in debate frequently and I trusted the former leader when he advised me of that. I felt I was in good hands.

In any event, I also want to thank, from Welland-Thorold riding, the Niagara Credit Union, Atlas and Civic Employees Credit Union, Canal City Savings and Credit Union and Thorold Community Credit Union, along with some 15 to 20 lawyers whose expertise is in commercial practice who assisted me in responding to this bill, telling you that this caucus is going to support the bill, of course, but expressing a couple of concerns.

One, as my colleague Mr Bisson did, there has been concern expressed to me about the nature of publication. Of course, we know that the Gazette is the official forum, the official venue for the publication of the reinstatement date which will be determined by regulation. It's been suggested by members of the bar, of course, that the Ontario Reports be used as a vehicle for transmitting that information. Obviously, from the credit unions' perspective, there are communication processes that are available to credit unions that would make it suitable.

Some concern though about the retroactivity of it and recognizing that the courts have, by and large, upheld retroactivity. But certainly, in cases when courts have upheld retroactivity, it's been reinforced, or it's been easier for the courts to uphold retroactivity when there's been notice at least of intention. That clearly in this instance was lacking.

I mention that—obviously, if people choose to litigate on that basis, God bless and let the courts deal with it. It remains, however, that the OPSEU strike, of course, lasted a considerable period of time. It lasted 30-plus days. It would have been, in our view, preferable for at least notice of this type of legislation to have been offered up when a strike first became the case. One is left with the impression that, yes, this government suspected OPSEU was going to fold its tents and quietly fold their picket lines in short order. Clearly, history has demonstrated otherwise. The women and men in the Ontario Public Service Employees Union fought with courage, with tenacity, indeed with solidarity. They won and they won notwithstanding the government's desire that they be crushed as an organized force of workers.

As well, this illustrates once again, as so many things did during the course of that work stoppage, how important the work of public sector workers is to our day-to-day lives. There was a tendency, certainly by the government, and unfortunately by a few other people, to disregard or discount the role of public sector workers. Well, here is but another example, another illustration of how important those public sector workers are to the economy of our communities, to the health of our communities, to the safety of our communities, to the welfare of our com-

munities and to the prosperity of our communities. It underscores the fact that we should indeed value public sector work. We should recognize the great contribution it makes to the wealth of this province.

The act is one which demonstrates, yes, a level of cooperation on the part of the opposition parties. One would only wish that there was the same level-headedness that would prevail in the context of, oh, let's say, this absurd appointment of Daniel Callaghan to the council of the College of Midwives here in the province of Ontario, a person totally unqualified, a person whose nomination has outraged women and advocates for midwifery and the community of midwifery here in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker: Speak to the bill, please.

Mr Kormos: The Personal Property Security Amendment Act that we're dealing with today in second reading pales in comparison to the outrageousness of that type of appointment. That, I regret to say, is going to be the legacy of this government far more than this appropriate but modest bit of cleanup after the government mismanagement of labour relations with the Ontario Public Service Employees Union.

As well I've got to tell you, noting here that as lead speaker I have an hour and a half to speak, that I'm not going to speak for an hour and a half by any stretch of the imagination. I'm not even contemplating it; I'm not even considering it in this case.

You should know that in the government agencies committee, the government members have moved a motion to impose closure on debate on concurrence to a mere 10 minutes for all three motions on concurrence. That means a maximum of three and one third minutes for each caucus to discuss some very important matters of appointment to some very important boards, agencies and commissions. I find it extremely disappointing, indeed beyond disappointing; it's outright disgusting.

First of all it's probably illegal, because if one reads Erskine May one discovers that the British Parliament of 1883 indicated quite clearly it is not the committee that can establish its own procedures other than, I presume, by unanimous consent; it is only the Legislature. I suspect very much that the government's motion in the government agencies committee is out of order, and if it's not out of order, it's certainly immoral and repugnant to any fairminded person and anybody who has any regard for the process of democracy, not only here in the House but in the committee.

The New Democrats will be supporting the Personal Property Security Amendment Act, will be consenting to its third reading. We will undoubtedly be assisting in communicating to those good lending institutions like credit unions—I can't emphasize strongly enough that the banks I have little sympathy for. By God, I have little sympathy for them. If this legislation was designed only to protect banking interests, we'd be opposing it with all the passion we could muster. Don't forget that the banks in this country and province made in excess of \$5 billion last year, made incredible profits, made profits off the deficit and haven't been called upon to help pay off that deficit. Rather, it's been the poorest who are being called upon to pay off the deficit.

Credit unions, however, community-based financial institutions owned by their membership—what a novel proposition. That's why they're strong; that's why they're valuable assets to the community. They have indicated a desire to see this passed promptly and we will be supporting it. I thank Mr Sterling for presenting this legislation. I encourage him to present more legislation, as frequently as possible, in as many diverse areas as possible. It will no doubt frustrate the whip and the House leader that I have an opportunity to respond to these things, but what the heck, I need a break at this point, don't I?

The Acting Speaker: Any further debate? Mr Sterling has moved second reading of Bill 35. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Shall the bill be ordered for third reading? Agreed.

1550

Mr Sterling moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 35, An Act to amend the Personal Property Security Act / *Projet de loi 35, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les sûretés mobilières.*

Hon Mr Sterling: I would just again like to thank not only the members of the Legislature, but Teri Kirk, director of my legal services, and Allen Doppelt who is the senior counsel in charge of the Personal Property Security Act, for their timely and hard work in getting this together in a very short period of time. And I thank members for their support.

The Acting Speaker: Any further debate? Mr Sterling has moved third reading of Bill 35. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TEACHERS ACT, 1995

LOI DE 1995

SUR L'ORDRE DES ENSEIGNANTES ET DES ENSEIGNANTS DE L'ONTARIO

Resuming the adjourned debate on the motion for second reading of Bill 31, An Act to establish the Ontario College of Teachers and to make related amendments to certain statutes / *Loi créant l'Ordre des enseignantes et des enseignants de l'Ontario et apportant des modifications connexes à certaines lois.*

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): Mr Speaker, it is indeed my pleasure today to have the opportunity to share a few thoughts with you, the members of the House and the people of Ontario, and to participate in the debate on second reading of Bill 31, the Ontario College of Teachers Act.

I believe that education is critically important to the future of Ontario and that excellence in teaching is critical to quality in education.

The concept of the College of Teachers has been suggested for many years. You may recall the Hall-Dennis report in 1967, and most recently the Royal Commission on Learning. Both reports supported the College of Teachers concept. There has been broad support to recognize teachers as a profession. By definition, a profession is a self-regulating body.

I have to tell you that over the past few months I have strengthened my personal respect for the hard work of

classroom teachers and the work they undertake every day in the classroom on behalf of our children and the communities they serve today. I can tell you, as a parent with five children, I understand the difficult balance in the role of a teacher. You must remember, the parent is the primary educator, but our teachers are trained educators, and we are partners indeed in our children's future. That's why I am pleased that our government, through Bill 31, the Ontario College of Teachers Act, is working to improve the quality of education in our province and to strengthen the position of the teaching profession itself.

I would like to note for your information, and the honourable members', the similarity of Bill 31 to legislation passed by this assembly in previous administrations; for example, the similarities with the Regulated Health Professions Act, which provides a comprehensive framework for the regulation of 24 health profession deliverers in our province.

Our entire educational system is undergoing profound changes today. These changes are being driven by an increased public demand for excellence and accountability. At the same time, it is clear we must make our system more affordable, while ensuring that we deliver value and quality to the students and the taxpayers of Ontario. Our government knows how essential it is to assure public confidence in education and to do so in a way that is economically sustainable to everyone.

As the minister, John Snobelen, has noted, a self-regulating College of Teachers represents a significant step forward for the profession of teaching itself in Ontario, and indeed for the teaching and education system of Ontario. Once established, the College of Teachers will be responsible for:

The development of standards and practices that define what an individual should know and be able to do when he or she enters the teaching profession and through his or her professional teaching career;

The accreditation of pre-service and in-service teacher education programs offered by faculties of education, colleges, school boards, teachers' federations and other organizations;

A new emphasis on classroom experience through an enhanced, pre-service teacher education program;

An investigation into disciplinary processes to maintain standards of excellence and competence in the members of the profession of teachers;

A provincial framework for ongoing professional teacher development and development of all educators.

New skills and educational opportunities to enable teachers to deal with the dynamics of today's classrooms are an absolute necessity. Teachers today, in the course of their careers will be required to deal with a diversity of issues, including the use of new technologies and the preparation of students for further learning and learning in the workplace.

A continued focus on the traditional basic skills of literacy and numeracy is even more important today than ever. Lifelong learning is indeed a continuous process, as is curriculum development. As the classroom changes, initial pre-service training must be supplemented by professional growth during the career of a teacher. The college will ensure the necessary framework for career-

long professional development and its availability to meet the requirements and expectations of the population.

Each of the initiatives I have just highlighted is designed to maintain high standards of practice and to give every teacher a new autonomy in dealing with the important issues facing their profession today. Ontario teachers deserve a well-articulated and coherent approach linking preparation, certification and ongoing professional support, a point that was not lost on the Royal Commission on Learning, I might add. The college will also have important implications for parents, students and taxpayers in Ontario.

As is the case with other self-regulating professional bodies, the Ontario College of Teachers will have significant public representation on its governing council and committees. In fact, 14 of the 31 members of the council will come from the broader public community. I strongly believe that to effectively regulate a profession such as teaching, the college must establish strong communication with all the partners: parents, students and the community. Public input is critical if we are to achieve our objective of increased public confidence in our school systems today.

I might add there will be a public process of hearing during the committee process on this bill, and there are other ways in which the college will address the issue of accountability in a more broad, consultative process.

Meetings of the governing council of the college and its disciplinary hearing process will be open to college members and to the public. Any employer or any member of the public will also have access to information on teacher qualifications in Ontario.

Finally, the council will report annually to the Minister of Education and Training, and a report of its activities will be tabled before this Legislature.

In conclusion, the creation of the Ontario College of Teachers will mark a historic moment for the teaching profession in Ontario and for our education system of the future. By establishing this body, we are acting on our commitment to maintain and improve the quality of education in Ontario today. We are working with our teachers to develop the classrooms of the future. Professional teachers working with excellence in education will help all our children and indeed all of our province. The new College of Teachers is the perfect professional forum for this to happen.

The Acting Speaker (Mr Gilles E. Morin): Questions or comments? Any further debate?

Mr Dominic Agostino (Hamilton East): I rise to speak on what I think is a very important bill, a bill that clearly will play a significant role in the development of classroom education and teachers in Ontario in years to come. It's one of those bills that I think all of us could probably find some parts of that we're comfortable with and agree with, and I think all of us, members on all sides of the House, have expressed some concerns about certain aspects of the bill.

Having spent seven years as a school trustee, I certainly saw first hand the competence, the dedication and the professionalism of teachers across this province. All of us have had experiences with teachers throughout our lives, throughout our educational process, that have left a lasting impact on us. I can certainly say that I have

experienced such teachers, I have experienced such professionalism and I've experienced some very positive impacts from tremendous teachers whom I had the opportunity and the honour of dealing with.

I'm pleased that I could be part of that system of education in Ontario, a system that has served us well over the years and a system that I believe is one of the finest, if not the finest, educational systems in North America and throughout the world. I think that's something we all agree with and something that all of us are striving to improve, to make sure we can do things that will help the educational system in Ontario, will make our system as competent and as professional as we have the ability to make it, and I think we agree on those aspects.

1600

When one looks at the bill in front of us, I have a little concern because I believe that a great deal of what is being proposed in this bill is already within the structure of the educational system within the school boards to do. I know from the time I spent on the board that the process for discipline, the process for regulations, the process for judging professionalism standards is already a fairly extensive one at that.

You already have a situation where with a complaint, a parent, a student, another teacher or another professional has to go through a chain that is already there and through an established process. You have your department heads, you have your principals, you have your area superintendents, you'll usually have your superintendent of human resources and personnel, you'll have the director of education and you'll ultimately have the board. So you already have a five- or six-step process often involved in the evaluation of teachers, often involved in dealing with teachers and concerns that occur and dealing with complaints made by students or parents.

That process is there, and I think for the most part that process works very well and has served us over the years to both protect teachers and ensure that they're treated fairly, to protect the students in the classroom and to ensure that the interests of the taxpayers are well served.

When we look at Bill 31, some of the concerns that have been talked about, of course, are the concept of a governing council or the concept of self-regulation, which means that the profession or the body that is being regulated should have the majority of the numbers. We see that within the medical profession; we see that within the legal profession. When you look at Bill 31, in theory 17 positions are to be elected members, including a supervisor officer, faculty of education rep and a private school representative. So, as has been mentioned before, that in a sense leaves 14 out of the group of 31 that would actually be classroom teachers.

That is not the same principle that is followed by the legal profession, where the vast majority are lawyers, and the medical profession, where the vast majority are doctors, as they should be. That is the concern that teachers who have spoken to me, representatives of the teachers' federations across the province, have brought forward: the fact that the control and the majority is not within the profession. Definitely that's a basic principle that I think we agree on, that if we're going to regulate this profession, the profession should also have the

control within this governing body, which would not exist as Bill 31 now stands.

I have some concerns, I think some very serious concerns, in regard to the powers that are given under Bill 31 to access information, the powers that are given to the registrar, the search powers. An investigator can basically obtain a search warrant from a justice of the peace and can search a teacher's home for any evidence that they feel is necessary for incompetence. I think these are extraordinary powers, powers that should not be given, through this bill, to a registrar. If there's a question of criminal or legal responsibility, it should fall within the right jurisdiction, either of a children's aid society, the police department or other investigative bodies.

That is one aspect of the bill that I think has teachers scared; that is one aspect of the bill that I think has many of us scared, from the point of view that it smacks of control, it smacks of invasion of privacy, it smacks of intrusion into people's lives beyond what is necessary from the point of view of trying to get the job done and ensure that the competence is there. These concerns have been expressed by teachers and by organizations across Ontario.

I want to read a copy of a letter received from the Coalition for Lesbian and Gay Rights in Ontario. It says:

"We, the CLGRO sexual orientation education project working group, are writing to express our concern about the Ontario government's recent legislation to establish a College of Teachers and an office of education quality and accountability (Bills 31 and 30). This legislation is an invasion of the rights and privacy of the people of Ontario.

"Both pieces of legislation refer specifically to section 38 of the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act. In this section, personal information is defined as on the attached page. The lesbian/gay/bisexual community sees many implications on all eight protected areas. Examples of invasions of privacy include: use of hearsay evidence, access of the public to health/ psychiatric/psychological history, use of information on sexual orientation, access to membership lists...use of political thoughts and opinions, and access to personal and confidential mail. All of this information can be gathered by the College of Teachers using a search warrant to enter your residence or workplace."

It's part of that letter that expressed the concerns, I think, that have been expressed by many teachers across Ontario. We have to be very careful, when we set up bodies and jurisdictions that have such massive powers, that there are the proper checks and balances in place to ensure that these powers are not abused to control very often a political agenda rather than a classroom agenda. There is a danger when you give a registrar under this situation so much power and when you have a bill, in a sense, that says it's self-governing but really is not, where the minister can require the college to pass regulations or bylaws that seem advisable or necessary. Even if they don't comply, this can be forced upon them.

You run into the danger of government ideology, of whatever government, dictating the standards, dictating the approach, dictating the level of competence that a government sees in a classroom, but more importantly, dictating in a political sense the political thought process

or point of view that may or may not agree with the government of the day.

That is a danger when you have a body that is supposed to be somewhat independent but at the same time has to follow every direction given by the minister, as this bill would have. I think there's a danger in that. We have to be very careful to ensure that if this bill does go through, those provisions are addressed and that those aspects that certainly I've expressed concerns on, and many teachers, in regard to the invasion of privacy are fairly addressed because I don't think we should be exposing anyone in our society to those types of potential abuses by people who may have a witchhunt or an agenda to go after for the wrong reasons.

The other concern with this bill is that it takes away some of the control, some of the power, that boards rightly have now and that board administrations have at this point under our system. It's a question of accountability. The accountability now rests ultimately with school boards, with school trustees, with people who are elected to carry out a mandate in a community and to run a school system.

That accountability that is now there will be somewhat removed with the provisions that are in the bill here. In a situation where a school board can simply pass the buck on an issue it doesn't want to deal with or a school board feels that an issue dealing with a discipline matter or dealing with a problem with a teacher or a certain occurrence is too hot to handle, you pass the buck on to a body that really doesn't have that front-line direct accountability to the taxpayers that school trustees currently have. That is a concern with part of what this bill is expressing now.

I certainly hope that this government will take the time to seriously reconsider what is in front of us. I realize that the process with this bill didn't start with this government. It started with the previous government, and now part of that process is continuing. But this government has an opportunity to ensure that if it's going to be done, it's done right.

We don't want an expensive bureaucracy at a time when there are cutbacks in education, when there are cutbacks in classroom education, when teachers have been laid off, when school boards are struggling to maintain basic services and trying not to increase taxes. Such a time is not the time to set up a bureaucracy that is simply going to add to the cost of education in Ontario, costs that range anywhere from \$10 million to \$20 million. Those are some of the estimates, if not more, as to the cost of the ongoing implementation and the ongoing operation of this body here.

I think that's a concern. It's a concern the government has to address. If you're going to ensure that there is such a college and if you choose to do that and ultimately, at the end of the day, you do—and I'm not going to sit here and just whale away at the concept because you certainly have the numbers, you have the majority in the House and you're ultimately going to pass whatever bill you want to pass, but I think it's important to listen to the concerns that have been expressed—if, at the end of the day, you're going to put a system in place, ensure it's not a system that is expensive, ensure it's not a system

that's going to add millions and millions of dollars to the cost of operating education.

Really, if we're concerned about front-line classroom education, if you're going to spend \$10 million or \$15 million or \$20 million, I would ask you to spend it in the classroom. Spend it on the front line. Spend it where it's going to impact directly, not in a bureaucracy or in a system whose function in many ways is already being done through the school boards and through the educational system with the controls that are now in place.

1610

There was a question in regard to the fees. Are teachers going to be charged an annual fee to be part of this? Are teachers going to fund this? If that's the case, is that fair? You're asking teachers now to fund something that really has no direct benefit to them except another level of control, another level of discipline, another body that will set standards that may already be in place in their own school boards. But you're asking those teachers to fund that. So there are your options: You either fund it through the tax base or you end up funding it through teachers. I don't think either option is fair, and that is one of the weaknesses within this proposal, which is that it's going to cost money. Certainly I don't think teachers should be expected to pay for this service that you're imposing upon them.

I believe that what is now there works, that the standards we have for classroom teachers in Ontario continue to be among the highest standards across North America. I think it's a system that works well because over the years we have worked collectively with school boards, teachers' organizations and parent groups to make the types of changes that have improved our educational system, and that is why we've made the type of progress we have.

I ask this government to please consider the concerns that have been expressed here today and that will continue to be expressed by teachers, but most of all to ensure that if we are going to move ahead within the system—and I go back to Premier Davis, who in 1983 said, "No model of self-governance should go forward without the enthusiastic support and endorsement of the teaching profession." I ask you to remember that clearly, and I ask you to talk to teachers.

Many of them across this province are opposed to this bill. Listen to their concerns. Ultimately, if you are going to go ahead with it, make the changes that are necessary to ensure it is a bill that is going to benefit teachers, that is going to benefit students but doesn't set up a confrontation, doesn't set up an us-against-them approach, doesn't set up a College of Teachers that teachers see as the enemy and the bad guys and the people they have to fight all the time. I think if you ensure that the voting majority on that committee are classroom teachers, you'll go a long way towards that.

The other point I made earlier that I want to reiterate is, look very closely at the provisions in regard to the invasion of privacy within this bill and the massive search powers you're giving the registrar that often will be used for witchhunts. Teachers already have a difficult enough job. Teachers already are very vulnerable to accusations and allegations that are made about them

every day, and some teachers' careers have been destroyed across this province as a result of that. I think we have to make sure the provisions in this act and in this bill do not allow open-ended witchhunts simply because someone doesn't like a particular individual or feels they have an axe to grind or don't agree with their point of view or other aspects of their life.

I ask this government to think very carefully and very hard on that. Work together with the teachers and the opposition parties, and let's ensure that if there's going to be a bill passed here, it will be one that is going to fit and is going to ensure that the concerns of all sides are addressed.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Richard Patten (Ottawa Centre): I'd like to acknowledge the views of my colleague from Hamilton East. He spent a great deal of time on the concept of self-regulation, which comes up from every speaker on all sides of the House, I might add. I look forward to the time when we get to committee to explore various options, various models that we have in Canada.

I would like to add one note to the comments made by the member for Hamilton East, and that is that the composition in terms of numbers in self-regulating bodies—it seems to me that public participation is in the range of about 15%. It's not the overwhelming numbers that are presented to us today, and this concerns many of the teachers, for many of the classroom teachers feel that they do not really have a fair degree of control; that if, for some reason, a number of teachers are unable to attend a particular meeting, they could lose seriously, even be part of what some may say is a majority.

I would even acknowledge the concern of the members for Grey-Owen Sound and Wellington for representation. I think they have heard from teachers, as perhaps we all have, in terms of the importance of this. In the final analysis, we're asking that teachers assume the responsibility to make their profession the very best it can possibly be, accept some responsibility for it. That means the government and the people of Ontario need to trust them to do so, and they need to feel they have the numbers to make sure they indeed are responsible, accountable and that their profession is the very best it can be.

Mr Bill Murdoch (Grey-Owen Sound): It certainly is my pleasure to speak on this bill and to congratulate all parties for being able to get together and support a bill without too much arguing. Hopefully, in the end we can all agree on the final draft, after it goes to the public for their input. As the previous member said, we have all heard, my friend from Wellington and myself and I'm sure all of us in this caucus and over there also, from different teachers and educators and people in the public about their concerns or what they think is good about this bill.

The main thing is that I hope this bill goes to a committee and that members of the public, especially our teachers, have a chance for input. I also hope it goes on the road, because it's hard for people from northern Ontario to get here to speak to this bill, and also around southern Ontario I think they like to see our committees go out on the road. I really hope the minister looks at this and allows this to go out to committee and on the road.

The main thing we've got to think about is our education and our kids. That's what it's all about, educating our kids and that we have a good system. I know that in Ontario we have probably the best education system in the world, but we want to keep that system, and I think this is one of the ways we can do this.

Interjection.

Mr Murdoch: The member from Windsor says that's not what I said when we were over there. I think I did say that. If you look back at Hansard, I've always said Ontario has the best teachers and the best education system in the world and we don't want to lose that. I'm sure when he was Minister of Education he felt the same way and tried to do his best—maybe not what everybody agreed to all the time, but I think he tried to work with us.

Again, I hope this will go to committee and out on the road.

Mr John O'Toole (Durham East): In response to the debate on Bill 31, I want to start by saying that the members of our caucus and indeed the Minister of Education want input from teachers and from the public at large. Just by way of qualifications for my comments, I was twice elected as a school trustee from the Durham East area, and my wife, Peggy, has been a teacher for many years. Indeed I have a high regard for teachers. With five children, two graduated from university, one in university, I'm well versed in the importance of education. I've talked with many teachers, many of whom are family friends and professional friends of my wife.

The issues taken up by the member for Hamilton East—just to go over them and make sure I've got them down—I don't have a lot of difficulty with addressing those concerns in the committee process. I'm sure it will be a very fruitful process.

I suspect the discipline language in the act covered in part V, I think—I'm not looking at it—is strong and in some areas needs to be addressed.

I think the most important one, with which I also am sympathetic, is the composition of the board itself. I believe there should, as in any profession, be a predominance of mix from the teaching profession, and I mean active, current teachers, not retired, resigned, what have you. I mean the teaching profession itself.

1620

I guess the other part, the power to investigate—I've heard concerns from people on that. I think that's up to the discretion of a public board to be sensitive to the individuals and the process by which an investigation would eventually occur. Again, we'll hear about that during the public process.

As for the fee, I think there is, of course—the subtle debate here is the power of the boards, the power of the unions and the power of the new college. That will surely get full debate during the public process, so I am pleased to debate and listen today.

The Acting Speaker: The member for Hamilton East, you have two minutes.

Mr Agostino: I'm pleased at the tone of discussion from all sides of the House on this. I think it points out the importance of what we're dealing with and on whom the ultimate effect of these decisions will ultimately be, and that is the students. I think it's an issue that goes

across political lines and it's an issue that I think we're all trying our best to make sure we present some fair alternatives on, some alternatives that can be supported on all sides. I think we've heard that in the last couple of days in the debate that has occurred, and the debate from the previous speaker and other members of the House on all sides who have spoken to this issue.

I would ask the government as well to look at the proposals and to look at what the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation and the Ontario Teachers' Federation have looked at as alternative governance models as well. They should be part of the discussion and the mix that has occurred, because I think there are some good ideas there. There are some ideas that are going to work and there are some ideas that, combined with some of the things that have been spoken about by government members today, can really give us the best of both worlds and give us a system that is going to ultimately please all sides.

I go back to the point the previous speaker and others have made, and that is the point again of the powers. I'm concerned as to the search powers, the warrant powers that ultimately are given strictly, in most cases, to police officers in this province under a certain process that you must follow. I'd certainly have a difficult time with a civilian appointed registrar who would have those same search powers and the ability to simply walk into people's homes. I really stress again how important that is to fundamental privacy and fundamental protection of people across this province.

If those things can be addressed and settled with the OTF, I think we will come up with a system that will work. Again, I'd like to thank all members of the House for the tone. I think it has been one of the most positive debates and discussions we have had in this place in the last eight months.

The Acting Speaker: Further debate?

Mr David S. Cooke (Windsor-Riverside): I want to make a few comments about this piece of legislation. I want to begin by saying that I agree with members' comments the other day, on the first day of debate on this legislation, that there is a bit of an unreal atmosphere that we're dealing with in this piece of legislation and the testing bill after this, when right after that we're going to be dealing with the real philosophy and the real ideology of education by this government, and that's, I think, Bill 34. That bill is going to develop into a much more controversial piece of legislation because it basically implements hundreds and hundreds of millions of dollars of cuts. I think teachers in this province are rightly concerned about the damage that legislation and the cuts to the general legislative grants this government has introduced will do to classroom education.

There are a lot of teachers—I think the Liberals might agree with me on this—probably close to 50% of the teachers in the province who in the last election voted for the Conservative Party; a lot of teachers voted for the Conservative Party, and I think those teachers feel absolutely and totally betrayed. They voted for the Conservative Party because they thought the promise that there would be no cuts to classroom education, which a lot of people interpreted as meaning no cuts to education at all, meant something. In fact, what we've now seen is

\$1 billion of additional cuts, cuts to the general legislative grants last year, and very significant negative cuts to classroom education in this province.

I would still argue that while this government is taking that very negative action, putting a structure in place like a College of Teachers is a positive enough move and will stay in place for many years to come. That structure is necessary to improve teacher education, to actually improve the control the teachers have over the profession in this province, and it will in the end improve the education system for the students of this province.

I'm a little confused at the position some have taken in the Legislature because they start off by saying they support the principle of a College of Teachers and then they go into talking about all of the things they disapprove of in this particular piece of legislation. I'm not exactly sure where they're coming from when it comes to voting on this bill on second reading or on third reading. Either you're in favour of a college—and it's actually the Liberal position that has confused me the most. I see the position that the member for Hamilton East has just taken and that the critic has taken, and I'm not exactly sure what they're ultimately going to do on this legislation.

Mr James J. Bradley (St Catharines): Stick around.

Mr Cooke: Oh, I will. After 19 years, I know that it's always quite unpredictable.

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): I used to be able to say it was all pensionable service too.

Mr Cooke: Yes, and so did I used to be able to say that, but no longer.

Where was I? The Liberal position on this before the election was absolutely clear. I'm not going to read it in its entirety, but I've got the letter from Charles Beer, who was the critic before the election. He made it very clear that the Liberal Party was in favour of a College of Teachers. I'll read one sentence, "The Ontario Liberals support the creation of a College of Teachers, as we believe it will have a significant and positive impact on students, student outcomes and the teaching profession."

I think that's an important sentence, because when we're debating a bill like this, we've got to keep in mind that the College of Teachers is not being created for the teachers of the province; the College of Teachers is being created for the students of the province. This is consumer legislation. This is legislation being put in place to protect the students of this province, to increase and improve inservice and pre-service training for our teachers.

It is not a piece of legislation—and I think we should all be honest about this. Why would the teachers' federations support a College of Teachers? Why would the Ontario Medical Association, if it had its way, support the College of Physicians and Surgeons? Why would any profession say that it wants government to have some control over that profession? Of course they're not going to embrace it enthusiastically. That's just the way that it exists. They prefer more freedom, the lack of regulation; it makes it easier.

In the end, governments have to decide on the importance of the public policy. In this case, this issue has been studied for 30 years. The Hall-Dennis report recommended it and it's been recommended by virtually every comprehensive report done on education since, completed

with its final recommendation by the Bégin-Caplan report.

Mr Bradley: I think it's Caplan-Bégin.

Mr Cooke: I'm going by alphabetical order. That report recommended very clearly that there needed to be a College of Teachers. I must say that when I was Minister of Education, I found it rather bizarre—

Mr Bruce Crozier (Essex South): So did we.

Mr Cooke: Thanks, Bruce. That's what happens whenever you criticize the Liberals; they just get a little touchy.

When I was Minister of Education, I found it very strange that if there was a complaint against a teacher, the ministry investigated the complaint, the Ontario Teachers' Federation investigated the complaint and ultimately it came to the desk of the minister to decide whether the teacher would be decertified. I think it is so old-fashioned and so paternalistic that the Minister of Education will decide whether or not a teacher can practise. This piece of legislation says that we should empower the teachers of the province.

There's one part of this legislation that I think is particularly good and is in line with the royal commission and the direction we gave, and that is that the College of Teachers will have a say, will have control over the faculties of education. One of the major complaints in our province about the education system, about the faculties of education is that not everything that is taught in our faculties is relevant to the classrooms. I believe that if a College of Teachers has the right to certify faculties of education in the province, that will mean that the faculties and what they teach will be much more relevant to what is needed in the classrooms of this province. I think that is an important step. You won't see the benefits of that for a period of time, but over a period of time we will see those very significant benefits to students in this province.

1630

I mentioned a couple of minutes ago about the 30 years that this recommendation has been around, and I say this because I think it's important to remember that there is a time to consult and there is a time to continue to consult, and then there's a time to act and decide that you're not going to have everybody on side, but the public interest demands that the Legislature move forward. I believe that when it comes to a College of Teachers, 30 years is probably long enough for consultation: two royal commissions; the teacher education committee that looked at this; a number of other groups that have said, "You should move forward to something much more formalized than what we've had for regulation of teachers in the province." I do not believe that we need now to have a committee that's going to travel all across the province and listen again to the same presentations. The time is now to decide, and the purpose of the committee—

Mr Bradley: You need to talk to the teachers.

Mr Cooke: The teachers, I agree, need to be heard and they will be heard. That's why all three House leaders have agreed that there will be public hearings in the social development committee of cabinet. But I believe if you take a look at the process of consultation that it's

been pretty adequate and that the implementation team that Frank Clifford headed up has been very comprehensive and as many of the issues where there can be a total consensus as is possible have been achieved.

There's one thing that I want to finish on, and that's the makeup of the council of the college, because I think it's very appealing, and I've heard this from some Conservatives, I've heard it from—and I say this as an individual member. I'm not voicing necessarily the opinion of my caucus on this. But I think if you take a look at what is being proposed for the makeup of the council, you will see that it's very much in line with the direction we gave the implementation team. I want to give you the rationale of why there was a decision that there should not be an absolute majority, whatever the size of the council was, necessarily of classroom teachers in the public education system.

It's very clear. I've said this to federation leaders. We cannot turn the College of Teachers into a college that is completely controlled, through the election process, by the federations, because if that's the case, we might as well accept the proposal that the Ontario secondary school teachers and others came up with to turn the Ontario Teachers' Federation into the college. If you're going to give it over to the federations, then let's not set up a new structure; let's just leave it the way it is.

But if you're going to set up a college where the public interest is predominant, then you've got to have a council that is going to have significant representation from outside the profession, and then you have to have the makeup where the teachers, yes, have a majority, but teachers—one from the private schools I think is fair. I don't agree with the concept of private schools, but if you've got private schools, you can't say to those teachers, "We're going to regulate you but you're not represented on the council." You can't say to supervisory officers and principals, "We're going to regulate you but you're not on the council." And you can't say to the faculties of education, "We're going to regulate you but you're not involved in the council." So there are three, one from each of those, and then there are 14 who are classroom teachers from the public school systems.

What the teachers in the federations want is an absolute majority. I just say to you that if that were allowed to happen, in my personal view—this is my personal opinion—the college would be destroyed. The elections would be organized in a way that the college would be completely controlled by the federations, and that would mean you'd get away from a college that served the broad public interest and, number one, the students. So I think that is going to be a fundamental debate that takes place in this place and in the hearings, but I'm telling you, a lot of thought went into this and I believe, if you look at the royal commission report, to adopt any other numbers would be completely contrary to the recommendations from the royal commission report.

Those are my limited comments. I want to say that I'm very pleased that the legislation has made it this far. I think that in the shorter term the more important piece of legislation to debate, and I hope we'll get into it next week, will be Bill 34, the bill that implements all the cuts. In the meantime, there are some things we can all

agree on. This is one of them and I think that after 30 years it's time to get on with it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs Margaret Marland): Questions or comments?

Mr Patten: I'd like to respond to some of the comments made by my colleague the member for Windsor-Riverside. Everyone will know that when the member was minister, he was the person who launched this, albeit on the basis of many studies of the past and many recommendations, and that's why we're here at this point.

I marvel at the question he asks us in the Liberal caucus, how come we have raised some questions now when we had said we supported in principle this college, which we do. I would suspect that the member for Windsor-Riverside would fully appreciate that when someone says they support a concept, they want to see what the wheels are when it's suddenly presented. While we still hold our views, we have some major questions about it and that will be part of the discussion in committee. The nature of representation in professional bodies from my study has been that a clear majority of classroom teachers is there and it can be any mix; that is a sign of trust.

I don't agree with the member that the federations are necessarily just sitting there and that unless they somehow control the whole college, this will overcome the good representation of individual professional teachers who would be elected, that they would enter into such a responsibility with such a negative purview. I think more of the federations than that and I think more of individual teachers who I hope will make up the college if we can agree in terms of the legislation.

Mr O'Toole: In response to the member for Windsor-Riverside, the previous Minister of Education and Training, I am pleased that you were so forthright in defining the membership of 17. I've gone through it, but not reading into the subtlety of it all; perhaps your experience and time on the task would give you that insight. I believe the public process is the place where we're going to hear from the constituent groups and I'm very much looking forward to that process, so thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): Further questions or comments? Seeing none, the member for Windsor-Riverside.

Mr Cooke: I want to express better, to the member for Ottawa Centre, in the final two minutes why I am confused. I remember a question in the House after the implementation team filed its report. You asked the Minister of Education and Training: "Where is the legislation? The report is tabled. Get that legislation into the House." The legislation is in the House. The legislation reflects entirely the implementation report, which you endorsed, and now you're picking up flack from some people who disagree, so you're trying to ride the fence.

I think that is unfair. No wonder people become cynical about politicians. Teachers in this province understand that whether you were in power, we were in power or they're in power, the legislation that's before the House would be the same piece of legislation. While you can play to the leadership and do what you want on occasion, I think the teachers in this province will understand that it's politics, and what we need on this

piece of legislation to restore public confidence in the public education system is not politics; we need a commitment to the public education system. That's what I think we should all be trying to do with the two pieces of legislation that we can support.

I'd finish by saying that I remember what the Minister of Health did when the Liberals were in power. You brought in most of the Regulated Health Professions Act. The makeup of their councils is similar to the proposals of this legislation. You did it when you were in government. We did it when we were in government. Now they're doing it. Let's just get the legislation passed and quit playing politics.

1640

The Acting Speaker: Before we move on, I'd like to apologize to the member for Wentworth North. I understand you're way down there and I missed you, but in the next go-around I'll certainly make sure that I acknowledge you, if you like. Further speakers?

Mr Bradley: I'm highly amused and I hope Hansard will report that almost the entire Progressive Conservative caucus, at least the members who are able to be present this afternoon with us, applauded wildly the NDP member for Windsor-Riverside on taking a Conservative position on this particular piece of legislation.

Mr Cooke: They're taking the NDP position.

The Acting Speaker: The member for St Catharines, try not to be too provocative, please.

Mr Bradley: The interjection is there that the government has taken the NDP position. They're all the same to me. NDP, Conservative, it's all the same to me in any event.

I want to say that better than dealing with this piece of legislation today, the Minister of Education was up scrambling to make an announcement on young people's employment today in the House, after much pressure from the member for Windsor-Sandwich, Sandra Pupatello. Finally, the government scrambled, put together a program and made some kind of announcement today. I'm pleased that Ms Pupatello was so successful in stampeding the government into action. But that does not have anything to do with this bill. Therefore, I want to deal with this bill and with the field of education, which relates to this bill.

I'm also surprised that we're dealing with the College of Teachers at a time when thousands of teachers across this province are now receiving pink slips. The college certainly is not going to be representing as many people as it would have anticipated. That's how it's connected to this particular bill. They have a situation now where more and more teachers are losing their jobs, and as a result the students in the classroom are going to feel the impact of this.

I have headline after headline in my local newspaper that deals with this. One says, "Hike Taxes or Cut Staff," for instance, and, "Cut Staff or Raise School Taxes 25% Over the Next School Years." Carol Alaimo says this in the St Catharines Standard:

"Those were the choices confronting Lincoln county Roman Catholic school trustees last night as they got a glimpse of what they're up against with recent provincial funding....

"If no cuts are made, school taxes would have to rise 25% by the end of 1997 to offset the lost provincial funding, said business superintendent Steve Hudson."

So the director of education said that they may have to lay off as many as 100 people from the Catholic school board in St Catharines.

Lorna Costantini, the chair of the board, said, "Trustees have been left to do the dirty work in all of this and it's a very difficult situation to be put into."

It was noted as well that the Lincoln county public school board and the Niagara South public school board both announced major layoffs. This article says that 559 teachers and staff get the pink slip and notes that it affects both of those boards; 277 employees in Lincoln, and in Niagara South 282 termination notices went out. It's most unfortunate when this is happening. "Niagara South Cuts Junior Kindergarten: Can't Afford It, Board Says." Subsequently, it says, "Hike Taxes or Cut Staff."

I know there are people who are going to be applauding this in the Conservative caucus, which is most unfortunate, because when I quoted to the Premier earlier this day, when I mentioned the issue, a very important emerging issue of employers who are cutting staff, turfing employees out into the streets while they're making unprecedented profits, when I mentioned that today, education was mentioned in Davos, Switzerland, by Mr Schwab, whom I quoted earlier. One of the things he mentioned was good education being needed. This is not any person from the teachers' federation; this is an individual who is in big business and making a report to business leaders of the world in Davos, Switzerland.

As has been mentioned, we're debating essentially an NDP bill. The NDP Minister of Education, Mr Cooke, who spoke previous to me, appointed his commission and enthusiastically embraced a College of Teachers.

With all the other issues confronting education today, it's beyond me why we're dealing with a bill that's related to the College of Teachers. I haven't had a large number of people come to me, either in person or sending letters or petitions or telephone calls, saying, "Would you please implement a College of Teachers?"

Mr Terence H. Young (Halton Centre): What about Parents for Education?

Mr Bradley: The member asked, "What about parents?" I have not had communications from parents wanting a College of Teachers as well, I simply have not, and I have a diverse constituency out there. They see other issues as being important. They see this government cutting junior kindergarten and therefore depriving those children of a good start in education, a start that is endorsed by thinking people almost universally now in education and non-education areas. People who previously were not even sold on the concept understand its importance today, particularly in the new kind of society in which we live, where we don't have what you call the nuclear families of the past being the norm necessarily.

So I wonder why this government is bringing forward this piece of legislation. I know people like Menno Vorster and Rod Albert and Larry French and Malcolm Buchanan and Jim Head and even Wendell Fulton, who now resides in New Brunswick, would all wonder why, first of all, this government is bringing this forward and

why the NDP is endorsing it with such enthusiasm as they have demonstrated.

While the concept has always been one which is attractive to many people, the details of this legislation certainly leave a lot to be desired, and one must anticipate that the government of Ontario must be in full consultation with a number of people who have expressed their concerns about this bill.

First of all, teachers are busy enough in today's society doing the teaching. One of the things I always was annoyed with related to the number of additional activities in which teachers become involved that are of an administrative nature as opposed to the actual teaching. I know this government was very concerned about forms for businesses. Well, I can tell you, the number of forms that teachers have to fill out now, the number of duties which are far beyond those in the classroom, already occupy those teachers.

Now you're setting up a College of Teachers which will be there for people who are trying to exercise discipline within the school setting. I suspect the Conservative Party is in favour of discipline in our school system, yet what you're going to do with the College of Teachers, the danger is there that you're going to allow disgruntled students and disgruntled parents and disgruntled other people within the profession to bring forward charges against those teachers, bring those to the College of Teachers, and again distract that teacher. And it's my understanding that the cost of legal battles would have to be borne by the individual teacher herself or himself.

I can tell you already it's difficult for teachers to exercise discipline. Many boards of education haven't shown the kind of backing they should for those who care enough and will take the time to be involved in disciplinary activities. What you're doing now is giving yet another opportunity for the disgruntled out there who have an axe to grind against individual teachers to use the College of Teachers to get at those people.

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The pressure will be there. I know teachers will endeavour to resist that pressure. The pressure will be there to please the butting-in people who want to interfere in the education system. The pressure will be there to appease those students who have an axe to grind against teachers and others in the profession. You will see now a tendency to try to appease those people instead of standing up to them. It's bad enough today to see some of the lack of backing that teachers have received in their endeavours to provide some kind of a disciplinary action within the school setting without giving another avenue of complaint for people who simply want to get at them.

I suspect many people in the government caucus are not aware of that aspect because I would suspect, again, that most of you in the government caucus would want to see a return to solid discipline within the school system, that that's the way learning can take place within that kind of setting. The establishment of this college affords the opportunity to the disgruntled to get at those people they want to get at. Be fairly warned that is what I see happening with the implementation of this bill. So I suspect that there are many people who keep that in mind

now who may be questioning the Minister of Education's enthusiasm about proceeding with this piece of legislation.

The number of teachers on the College of Teachers is a matter of contention as well. Teachers themselves have a vested interest in ensuring that those who are either not capable or those who have been indiscreet are removed from the profession because it reflects badly upon the entire profession. So you will find that even if they have the majority on this particular college, they are going to not favour those who are deserving of appropriate discipline and who have reason to be chastised or disciplined. That is what you will find in those circumstances. They have that vested interest in doing so, and yet we see that you're going to bring in other people in greater numbers than I think is wise.

This is yet another bureaucracy that you're establishing. I thought the Conservatives stood for less bureaucracy, and yet here you are establishing yet another bureaucracy for people to deal with. It's inconsistent with the philosophy I've heard from many of the right-wingers who sit in the government benches, who are so critical of any other bureaucracy, except now they are acquiescing to the Minister of Education's desire to see this bureaucracy established and yet another fee established in addition to the federation fee that must be paid by members of the teaching profession. You're going to levy yet another \$90 on top of that—at least, \$90 at this point in time.

There is then a worry about frivolous and vexatious items being brought before the college and people being publicly embarrassed and therefore being intimidated into taking actions within the school setting that are not good for the education system as a whole. The employers at the present time have the opportunity and the power to deal with this. You have vice-principals and principals within schools who have considerable authority to deal with members of the teaching profession. You have superintendents of education over specific areas of jurisdiction, both geographically and in terms of such things as instruction. In addition to that, you have a director of education, and you have trustees. So there is that opportunity today without establishing yet another bureaucracy for this purpose.

I noticed when people were asked about this, they took votes within the school setting, and these were secret ballots that took place, that unanimously in most of the school settings there was a vote against the establishment of a College of Teachers. This idea was first floated, in my recollection, by the Honourable Dr Bette Stephenson when she was Minister of Education, and I believe this would have been either in the late 1970s or the early 1980s, and the idea was abandoned by a very practical and pragmatic government of the day, which understood the danger of this particular piece of legislation.

Mr Cooke: It was going to get rid of the OTF, that was the difference.

Mr Bradley: The member for Windsor-Riverside interjects—not from his seat, but nevertheless he interjects—that it was going to get rid of the—

Mr Cooke: It was no longer mandatory to belong to a union, that was their legislation—big difference.

Mr Bradley: No longer mandatory to belong to a union. Well, if you don't see an agenda here, member for Windsor-Riverside, which could contemplate down the line that happening again, then you aren't as perceptive as I've known you to be over the years in terms of your political perceptions, at least in this province.

Mr Cooke: I guess I'll take that as a compliment.

Mr Bradley: It is a compliment.

The Acting Speaker: Member for St Catharines, please address the Chair.

Mr Bradley: I will address the Chair, of course, because that is the way things are done in this chamber and I would not want to deviate from the way things are done in this chamber, except I see on the clock that I have a tremendous amount of time left. It's rather interesting—I see, they've now flashed up the real amount, which is 14 minutes.

I don't want to dwell on the fact that this is NDP legislation or that the subsequent legislation, Bill 30, that we will be dealing with again is NDP legislation, where we're dealing with mandatory testing, which it is believed is required out there. I don't want to dwell on that fact, but I did have to note that is the case. I know people are being somewhat ecumenical in here today—

Mr Cooke: Lyn supports that.

Mr Bradley: Whenever the member for Windsor-Riverside says somebody from the Liberal Party or the Conservative Party supports it, he's usually nervous about his own position. He's usually nervous that Malcolm Buchanan is watching television and that Malcolm will be expressing his very strong views to the NDP caucus, because Malcolm will be at the leadership convention. I'm sure there will be questions addressed to the candidates about the College of Teachers; if there aren't, I will plant some with my NDP friends at these various forums we have.

I just think this is an unnecessary piece of legislation. It's not that it's overly offensive, because I think there are going to be some discussions taking place that may modify the bill. If there isn't, I'd be very surprised and I think the government would be unwise.

I look and see in the agenda that you had out there, this, to me, would not rank as an item of great importance and one that should be considered much more carefully by members of the caucus. I never know what goes on in the various caucuses—I don't think that's the plural, but I'll use the English language plural "caucuses"—in terms of what is told to the members, but I really wish the members of the caucus would have been aware of the potential for the vexatious and frivolous complaints that will come forward and their impact on discipline in our school system.

I look out there and see that there are a lot of dedicated people who worry considerably about how much backing they're going to get if they're prepared to stand up to people who are disruptive or people who are unfairly affecting others within a classroom setting or a school setting. Every time you do something like this, you take away an incentive for those people to act in an appropriate manner in dealing with discipline. There was a time, I suspect, when most of us went through the school system that the discipline system was somewhat

different. I'm not saying it was right all of the time, but there is a different atmosphere out there now.

The challenge for teachers today is considerably different from that which faced people in the classroom a generation ago who often had very strong support from the parental community, strong support from boards of education, and a general atmosphere in our society which said: "We want to see some order. We want to see some discipline within the school system."

In recent years, I don't think you can say that as much. That is not the fault of those in the classroom; part of it is the society. A former director of education once said that it's difficult to run a hard school system in a soft society. That was his answer when people said discipline was being loosened too much. But if you look at the level of tolerance that is required by teachers today as compared to a generation ago, it's considerably more, and much of that is because a school system and society will not back up those who are prepared to exercise appropriate discipline. It's a very important issue out there. I think people know about that, yet this bill—they didn't explain in caucus what the impact could be.

1700

There may be some benefits you see in this bill, and I understand that there may be, but I think there's a major detriment, and that's the one I have decided to dwell upon today because I think it's key to this particular legislation.

There's also a concern that there's a search-and-seize potential in this legislation, that items can be searched out in the classroom by force, that someone could come into the classroom from the college and seize whatever items are there for the purpose of its investigations. There's a concern that this might be happening within the person's home as well. Perhaps that can be alleviated by the Minister of Education and Training, but that concern certainly has been expressed.

Some will say, "Aren't the teachers' federations divided on this, or aren't they softening their stand?" I cannot speak for them, I'm not a mindreader, but I suspect part of it is that they're being assaulted—I don't mean that in a physical sense, but in a political sense—in so many different ways that one of the things you tend to do when that happens is that you give in on certain items that may not be of as great consequence as other items. I suspect that's part of it.

The other part is the inevitability, that spokespersons from all political parties have indicated some degree of support for a College of Teachers. Often, when a group out there sees the inevitability, they simply try to modify the legislation or not annoy the government to as great an extent as they might otherwise, because there's other legislation to be dealt with. I find that most unfortunate, because each bill should be dealt with on its merits.

What I find most unfortunate in a lot of legislation is that it isn't explained to caucus as it should be. The minister comes in, makes a pitch, and that's what the minister wants, it's the minister's point of view. What you have to have within caucus are people prepared to challenge the minister. Never mind if the Premier doesn't like it—the Premier usually does like it, by the way—and never mind if the minister doesn't like it and that you think that's somehow not going to allow you to be

upwardly mobile. People make their mark by asking the important questions.

Think of yourself: Do you really respect people who tell you what you want to hear, or do you respect people who will ask the right questions and disagree with you on matters of principle and matters of detail? I think the latter. Most of us respect those who will challenge the authorities. That's why when legislation such as this comes before the caucus, it's important to ask those important questions.

I know caucus is never long enough to do it, and I know there's always a minister there who assures you that all your concerns will be looked after, but in our Legislature and in all parliamentary bodies there's a need for individual members to question more what those in authority put forward, because those in authority usually get their ideas from the unelected people—the people who get paid more than you do, by the way, as you will see from time to time—members of the bureaucracy. There are many good people within that bureaucracy, most certainly, the advisers to the ministers, the advisers to the Premier, all of whom have some very good ideas—these are bright people—but most of them have never had to meet the electorate at the doorstep, and they don't have to go back to explain to people in their communities what the legislation is all about the way you do, with certain consequences as members of the governing party.

I think this bill fits that category. If there had been a thorough debate within the Progressive Conservative caucus, I really wonder if you would be proceeding with this legislation in its present form or even at all. While you may have lost this one, I hope you will look at some of the other bills in that light. Exercise your authority. Just because a person has "Honourable" in front of her name or his name doesn't mean that person has an IQ of 260, by any means. Qualification to be in the cabinet varies from person to person, and there are many considerations. I don't want to be unkind at all so I'll just put it in those ways, because, heaven forbid, why would Peterson have put me in cabinet? One would ask that on the other side.

But the reason I say that is that there are people outside of the cabinet who are every bit as bright, every bit as politically attuned, every bit as wise as those who sit at the cabinet table, except they don't have the people following around carrying their briefcases and they can't get into the car and look important and go into the cabinet meeting and be asked questions in the scrum going in. But that doesn't mean the viewpoints of the rest of us—particularly I'm thinking now of the government caucus—aren't important. They are important.

Don't be intimidated by the "Honourable" in front of somebody's name. Once you leave, by the way, in this Legislature—the Speaker will be interested in this—you do not retain the word "Honourable," after you're no longer in the cabinet here. Federally you do; provincially you do not. You don't even have to worry about them in their afterlife. So don't worry about that.

There's another issue—

Hon Norman W. Sterling (Minister of Consumer and Commercial Relations): Does that make you dishonourable?

Mr Bradley: Not at all. The member for Carleton—

The Acting Speaker: Whom I note is out of his seat.

Mr Bradley: He's out of his seat, but let me tell you, he's a strong supporter of the Niagara Escarpment Commission. I know he will not allow the Minister of Environment and Energy to abolish the Niagara Escarpment Commission and radically change that plan. That's why I don't mind when he intervenes in this House, because I know of his considerable clout within the cabinet. He is an individual I can say is as qualified as anybody else in the Tory caucus to be in that cabinet. I will give him that.

But back to the bill, because the Speaker wants me to speak to the legislation. I see many problems with this. I could go into great detail. I think members know the detail, however, of this bill.

In British Columbia, probably under the former Social Credit government, they established a British Columbia College of Teachers. They had a different formula for the number of people from the profession and not from the profession who were on it. In British Columbia, 15 of the 20 members of the governing council are elected, each representing a geographic zone, each zone representative selected by members of the college working or living in the zone. Apparently, it works very well there in British Columbia, and I suspect that if you had to proceed, if you really thought this was absolutely necessary, that formula might be useful for Ontario.

It's another issue that I thought the government would have been dealing with today as opposed to this piece of legislation. I see the member for St Andrew-St Patrick here, and I know she must be beside herself—she's not in her seat but she must be beside herself today—at the fact that Gerry Phillips, the member for Scarborough-Agincourt, and Mike Colle, the member for Oakwood, in the last couple of days have asked questions about the Ontario government, the Minister of Education reaching his paws into the pot which is the property tax in Toronto and Ottawa and sending the money elsewhere. We accept that with the provincial income tax. We accept that with the sales tax. That's a province-wide tax and so on. Very dangerous to allow the government to get in on the property taxes.

Mr Patten: Unconstitutional.

Mr Bradley: The member for Ottawa Centre says unconstitutional; perhaps. Very dangerous. That must be just racking the government caucus with dissension, because if I were sitting there from Metro Toronto—or indeed never mind Metro Toronto; from anywhere—saying the provincial government's going to have the right to come in and take away property tax revenues and give them to some other community, I'll tell you, I would be very concerned about that. I would be asking a lot of questions about that, not just as a representative of Ottawa-Carleton, not just as a representative of Metropolitan Toronto, but as a fairminded person and a person who knows you can't let the provincial government get their paws on the property taxes, which are local in nature.

As I say, there are a myriad of issues. I'm very concerned about the number of classroom teachers who are losing their jobs, because I know how that's going to reflect upon the children within the system, even adults

who are retraining. Everybody knows there's a lot of dislocation of people, that the downsizing I talked about with the Premier this afternoon in my question is taking place. Yet what your government is doing will end up discouraging some people from being involved in adult education, and you're going to pay for that down the line. I know it looks like a lot of money when you see it up front, but down the line those people will not be equipped to have the jobs within our society.

The College of Teachers isn't going to help those people. It's not going to help the laid-off teachers, the young people trying to get into the profession, the students, those with special needs within the education system. That's why I think the government is unwise to move forward with this NDP legislation this afternoon in this House.

1710

The Acting Speaker: Comments or questions?

Mr Cooke: I'm not sure I'll take the entire two minutes. I just thought I would get up and make the point to everyone here, now you understand why I'm confused. The critic says yes, the Liberal leader says yes, the member for Hamilton East says, "I don't know," and now the House leader for the Liberal Party says—I think he said—no. I know they're the enemy and not you, but on this particular piece of legislation I'm just watching as an independent observer, and I think to myself, if ever there were a piece of legislation that could be used as a teaching tool in the political science departments in the universities across this province of why people are often confused about where the Liberals stand, the film from this would be really good teaching material in the faculties and then people would understand why the Liberals get the reputation of being all over the map, flip-flop on everything. I'll just sit down with that.

Mr Toni Skarica (Wentworth North): Madam Speaker, I figured you didn't wish to call on me because I wanted to say something nice. I just want to compliment the member for Windsor-Riverside for the position he took, not because of the position itself but because he had the courage to take it. It's not going to give him any political favours. He obviously spoke from the heart and showed a great amount of integrity, and I wish to applaud him for it.

In contrast, the member for St Catharines took a somewhat different position and referred to the cuts and the layoff notices to the school board. What's really dismayed me is the fact that the ultimate cut to the school boards will be in the area of less than 2%, yet some of the school boards saw fit to send out notices to 25% of their teachers, causing untold suffering and trauma to those teachers. I had one of them come into my office a few weeks ago from Halton. She had been there for eight years and you could tell she was a very kind and compassionate and dedicated teacher. I told her: "You are a victim of politics. You are not going to be laid off." I'm not a clairvoyant, but sure enough, a week later she phoned my office and said she was not going to be laid off.

I've looked now at the Public Sector Salary Disclosure Act and I see pages and pages of superintendents and directors making over \$100,000 a year. How many of these people got layoff notices in the last few weeks? I

would be surprised if even one did. That's the kind of politics that's being played here.

To close, I would just like to compliment the member for Windsor-Riverside for taking the courage to take the correct position—rather, not the correct position but a position he believes in.

Mr Patten: I would like to build on some of the areas identified by my colleague from St Catharines, who of course has the flair, which other people don't, to relate many things germane to an issue. He has that skill, which he's developed over the years.

He's accused by the member for Windsor-Riverside of flip-flop. It seems to me that what the member from Windsor is suggesting is that somehow you shouldn't have a mind of your own. You can see, I say to the member for Windsor-Riverside, that we all have our individuality. We have ways in which we come at things—

Mr Cooke: Let the record show the member has a grin on his face.

The Acting Speaker: Order, please. Order.

Mr Patten: We come to this House with our own thoughts. We don't have the mindless control of everyone must say the same thing, think the same way etc.

I would reinforce that, yes, we have said we support something in principle, but it doesn't mean that when the legislation first surfaces there are not issues that are to be addressed. There are issues that are to be addressed. I would like to see them addressed. And if they are addressed I will be supporting this. If they are addressed, and I hope all sides are hearing that particular message, and it is not solely from a position of our own views, it is listening very carefully; listening very carefully to teachers, listening very carefully to different people in the educational area.

In the final analysis, when we talk about the area of self-regulation and numbers, it will boil down to, I contend, trust; whether we truly trust classroom teachers to be in a majority, to support and develop their own professional body in order to serve the students of this particular jurisdiction.

Mrs Marion Boyd (London Centre): It's always interesting when Liberals accuse New Democrats of speaking with one voice, because that's not something we're noted for.

This particular issue, the whole issue around self-regulation within the teaching profession, is one that is a very difficult one. There is no question that I think there is an expectation that professionals who are seeking to raise the status of their profession would welcome the possibility of being self-regulated. I think the public are often very puzzled about what is going on in this situation. What many people don't understand, I think, and what needs to be taken into account, is the process that has been there to discipline teachers in the past.

As a past Minister of Education, I believe very strongly that it is inappropriate for a minister of education, a political person, to be the last arbiter on a teaching certificate. I don't believe that's appropriate. I think one of the reasons my colleague from Windsor-Riverside, also a former Minister of Education, and myself feel as strongly about this is that we were put in that position again and again, and we do not think that is an appropri-

ate position for a politically elected person to be in and yet under the act, as it now stands, that was the process.

Teachers may argue that there is another way to do this, that you can use the current procedures and then end up in a different place than the minister. I think our position has been that if you have a solution that enables a profession to become self-regulating, to join the ranks of the registered health professions and some of the other professions, then the time to do that, if we're going to change it, is to do it all at once. That's why we are supportive of the creation of the college.

Mr Bradley: The first response I will have is to the member for Windsor-Riverside when I think of people taking different positions. I always wonder how the New Democratic Party and my good friend the member for Windsor-Riverside could ever have taken a position to abrogate contracts, to break contracts in the public service. That was always something I believed—you could understand if another party did it, but the NDP would never break a collective agreement. But they had to break a collective agreement, they felt, in the public interest, and did so. That was inconsistent with NDP policy. Yet had a Liberal government done that, we would have been accused of flip-flopping. But I understood how difficult it was in those days. It was just as difficult as it was raising tuition by 42% when you're opposed to tuition altogether. But I don't want to dwell on those items.

The member for Wentworth North—it's rather interesting to watch. Just because somebody agrees with him, with your party, somehow, "Oh, we respect you because you agree with this and it's a matter of principle." It's a matter of politics in this place with the NDP and some other parties as well—

Mrs Boyd: Not the Liberals, I suppose.

Mr Bradley: And the Liberals from time to time. Do you not understand that this is his bill? What else is he going to do? He's the person who proposed the College of Teachers. That's why he's in favour of it.

As for your attack on the education system, do you not understand as well that the board is legally obligated to give layoff notices or it's in trouble under labour law? That's why they have to give those notices. They don't like doing it. It causes a lot of disruption. For you to blame the board instead of pinning the tail on the donkey—the government—is deceptive.

1720

The Acting Speaker: Are there any other members who wish to participate in the debate?

Mr Rick Bartolucci (Sudbury): Thank you very much, Speaker, for giving me the opportunity to share a few personal views with regard to the College of Teachers, its composition and its mandate.

Let me approach this from a very personal point of view, with a bit of background. I've been a teacher for 30 years, fresh out of the classroom as of June 8, 1995. I spent seven of those years directly in the classroom, several as a vice-principal and, finally, many as a principal.

When I left Our Lady of Fatima in Sudbury, the Sudbury District Roman Catholic Separate School Board, I left a group of very happy teachers; a group of very competent, hardworking students; a group of parents who

thought it was extremely important that they intermingle with the school as primary educators in this whole process; a member of a federation who believes that the individual needs of all students are of paramount importance when it comes to deciding how we are going to govern the education of children; a board that believed in offering programs to the fullest and providing resources to ensure that those programs are carried out to the best of the abilities of those people connected with the program.

When I return to the classroom, when I return to the board, I'm going to find a completely different place. I'm not going to find junior kindergarten any longer. I don't know if senior kindergarten will be an option. I certainly won't find resources for special-needs children, and I won't find guidance and counselling services the way they were when I left. I will find increased class sizes, I will find double- and triple-grading to be more commonplace than anybody on the other side will want to believe, and I will find an environment that has a pupil-teacher ratio so high that it will be impossible to give children the individual needs, the individual time, the individual efforts necessary to ensure we bring out the best in children. But that's for another debate next week, with Bill 34, and certainly we'll be expanding on those points.

As a teacher and now an elected representative, let me tell you I'm very happy that this is going to committee. I'm also very happy that the majority of the committee will want the committee to travel to different jurisdictions. I'm very happy to hear from several members of the committee that they're willing to have committee meetings at a time when teachers will be able to take part in these hearings. I'm happy for all of that, because it's critical that you listen carefully to what classroom teachers are saying about the College of Teachers.

Let me tell you, if you do more than listen, if you adopt some of the recommendations teachers are going to be making to this committee, if you carefully weigh the reasons for their recommendations as opposed to what you have now, you just may get all-party support, in the final analysis, for the Ontario College of Teachers.

Let me go on record right now as being abundantly clear. The model that's presented to me today for the Ontario College of Teachers cannot be supported by me as a representative and it certainly couldn't be supported by me as a teacher, because it does not allow what I think is basic to the Ontario College of Teachers: that teachers are the majority in representation. No matter how you define it, that's not the case now.

I've heard over the course of the last couple of days that teachers are afraid of the Ontario College of Teachers. Absolutely not. Ontario teachers are constantly under scrutiny. They are not afraid of accountability. They are accountable to their students every day; they are accountable to their fellow professionals; they are accountable to parents; they are accountable to a principal; they are accountable to an area superintendent; they are accountable to the director of education; they are accountable to trustees, and it goes on and on up the ladder until you get to the Minister of Education. So rule out the idea that teachers are afraid of the College of Teachers. They're not.

Teachers are used to constant accountability, constant scrutiny, and by and large teachers are happy with that because it helps to bring out the best in them. As I look across the way and I see the members for Durham or Kitchener-Wilmot, who are teachers, I understand and know that these people are dedicated, just as the rest of the teachers in Ontario are dedicated. We can, we are and we will be able to ensure that the College of Teachers is what everyone wants in Ontario, supposedly, but must involve us to a greater degree, must involve teachers to a greater degree, must ensure as other colleges do that they, the teachers, form the majority on this college. Clearly, that's not the case now.

Rule out the accountability factor; rule out the fact that teachers are afraid of scrutiny. Nonsense. They do it on a daily basis, every single, solitary moment of the day from the time get up until the time they get home until the time they retire and in between, while they do all the extra-curricular stuff such as preparation, such as extra-curricular activities, such as meetings involving students and parents.

We are not and they are not afraid of accountability or scrutiny at all. What they are afraid of is that they're going to be given a College of Teachers that is so political in nature, that is so skewed one way that they will lose control of the important things they feel the College of Teachers should be dedicated to, and that's professional development. By and large over 90% of teachers in Ontario work at improving themselves on their own time, at their own expense nights, weekends and during the summer months when everybody feels that they're on holidays. Let me tell you there isn't a teacher who sits in this House who will dispute that.

Another serious concern with the proposed format as it's presented to us now is with regard to the discipline section and hearings. Let me outline very briefly to you what happens at the local level when a principal gets a complaint. I'm in the school and I receive either a phone call or a visit from a parent. Let's use the complaint of a verbal assault. In other words, the teacher either yelled at my child or was verbally abusive in some way to my child.

What happens? The first thing that happens is that the parent is called into the office and we discuss what that parent's interpretation of the incident is. Then we call in the child. The principal, the parent and the child sit down and we look at the situation so that there can be clear interpretation as to what direction we're going. Then at some point in time the principal interviews the teacher so that he or she can get both sides of the story. Once that's taken place, the principal will inform the parent. At that point in time, the parent has the option to not be satisfied with the findings and at that point in time can go on to the area superintendent, and the process starts all over again.

1730

Let me tell you, that happens on a regular basis nowadays. In many instances it's a frivolous complaint, and sometimes there's validity attached to it. But the underlying factor that is so vitally important for all of us to understand is that every situation has to be treated with the same respect, with the same compassion and with the

same sensitivity, regardless of whether it's valid or frivolous. That clearly is a weakness with regard to the Ontario College of Teachers.

I want to compare it to the police services complaint commission and relate how, as a police services board member a few years back, I was in charge of the complaints committee. What would happen is similar to a school. We would have a complaint about a police officer. We would call in the officer and the member of the public who was making the complaint, and there would be exchanges of information and some resolution. So it happened rather quickly. It happened over the course of a week or 10 days, similar to what happens in the school right now. Resolution takes place usually after three or four days if it's very complex, after a day or so if it's not such a complex case.

What happened was that the government introduced the police services complaint commission, so that now complaints didn't go to the local board, they went to the police services complaint division. What you had was members of the public waiting months to hear their complaints and police officers having to wait months to get some type of resolution to it.

That's exactly what's going to happen with the Ontario College of Teachers. We are going to be so backlogged with complaints, there is going to be such a backlog of cases to be heard, that without a doubt what you're going to have are teachers not feeling very secure even though they know by and large and in most instances they have nothing to fear, and a public that's dissatisfied with the process because they get no resolution quickly to the problem. Indeed, you're going to have a breakdown of what I consider to be a strong bond being built up between the primary educators, the parents, and the secondary educators, the teachers. That's a major concern of mine as well.

I'm not going to highlight the other shortcomings of this particular piece of legislation; they've been highlighted already. But I clearly want to go on the record as saying that in its present form I won't be supporting this on second reading. I want you to understand that during the election I did support a concept of the College of Teachers that was acceptable information to teachers because they had the underlying fact made clear to them that our model would indeed respect their abilities to govern themselves. Clearly, this legislation does not do that.

I thank you for giving me the opportunity to present what I consider to be two of the five faults of this legislation. I would like to also say that I think it is clear that teachers will support the Ontario College of Teachers if in fact they believe the ownership of that college is truly theirs. This is not the case with this particular piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker: Questions or comments?

Mr Patten: I think it's evident the member for Sudbury has a wealth of experience in the educational field as a teacher, as a principal, as a person who was on the police commission, and it has provided him with some practical insights in terms of how something can be most expeditious or how something perhaps can be a bureaucratic nightmare.

I would like to underline one of his comments, and that's one of the fears that many people have in the disciplinary procedures that are offered to this particular college that seems to be really top-heavy and centralized. That is the worry of the backlog of complaints and taking out an element of complaint that goes almost immediately to the college, that removes the community in a sense from the understanding of people and their neighbours, who they know in the neighbourhood, who they know tends to be responsible and who may not be, and who may be the sorts of individuals who might raise on numerous occasions frivolous complaints.

I think it would be incumbent upon all of us to heed very carefully the comments of the member for Sudbury, who feels very deeply, and I believe he is reflective of what many teachers feel. He has thrown out a challenge to us to see if we can provide some of the amendments that will enable all of us to truly provide for a college that teachers throughout Ontario will feel proud about and will feel they have the control over in order to promote their professionalism.

Mr O'Toole: In response to the member for Sudbury, in all respect, I respect your professional point of view as a teacher. I guess my point is that the long history of this issue, 30 years, I think speaks to the divisive concerns that you've expressed. But I'd like to point out to you that the royal commission—and also that Margaret Wilson, who is proposed to be the person involved with the College of Teachers, also served on the Ontario Teachers' Federation and was president of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation for many years. I think she has been through a process more closely than any of us. She's been championing the Ontario College of Teachers and I'm certain has had to try and deal with many of the teacher union organizations throughout the province.

There are issues that I think the public debates will address, and I am satisfied, whether it's the composition of the board itself or indeed the disciplinary process, those issues will be adequately addressed. But I think you have to look to the long term, to the profession itself, to the changing nature of education in Ontario, indeed in Canada and in the world. The profession needs this recognition, and that does not undermine for one moment the integrity of individual teachers like yourself and other teachers who are sitting in this Legislature who have concerns. As participants in that discussion, after second reading at committee we will certainly come to a better consensus and an improved vision and autonomy for teachers and the profession itself.

This debate today has been very informative for me, but I also think in the long run we need broader consultation with parents, who pay for it all, for the teachers, and indeed students. Thank you very much for allowing me to speak.

1740

Mr Michael A. Brown (Algoma-Manitoulin): I appreciate the comments of my friend from Sudbury. He brings to the debate something that is really necessary: the view from someone who has been in classrooms for many years, an administrator for many years. He's someone who knows of what he speaks. He's experienced it, lived through it.

My main contact with the education system over the last 20 years has been through my children, who have been so well served by the teachers in our elementary and secondary panels. It is really important. I think of the impact teachers have made on the lives of my children and on the lives of their friends and acquaintances, people like Rick Bartolucci who have been in those classrooms and have been making a difference.

When the member for Sudbury speaks, I know the real world is encroaching on the grand designs of government and the grand designs of governance. We sometimes in this place see things in the big picture, but in seeing the big picture, we sometimes forget what it's really like on the ground.

When the member for Sudbury brings these views about the feelings of teachers to this House, we really have to listen. These are real issues. They are not the stuff of high philosophy, but the stuff of the real world. I hope all members will take the comments of the member for Sudbury into consideration as we proceed through this important debate.

The Acting Speaker: Further questions or comments? Seeing none, the member for Sudbury.

Mr Bartolucci: I will not take the whole two minutes, but I'd like to refer a few comments to the member for Durham East. I appreciate his comments. I'd just like to tell him that it would be wonderful if the Ontario College of Teachers would have teachers supporting the college, and you know what we have to do to ensure that happens. It means everyone has to give a little, understand the positions of all the people involved, and you know what? There can be some type of positive determination arrived at.

Clearly, the way it's devised now will not be acceptable to teachers. Clearly, as a member representing the riding of Sudbury, it is not acceptable to me. I look forward to the committee meetings. I look forward to the submissions. I look forward to the openness and frankness that will take place between all members of the committee and the different people who will be making presentations.

I'd like to refer back to what Bill Davis said as the Premier in 1983: "No model of self-governance should go forward without the enthusiastic endorsement of the teaching profession." That is the challenge of the committee.

ROYAL ASSENT SANCTION ROYALE

The Acting Speaker (Ms Marilyn Churley): I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor has been pleased to assent to certain bills in his chambers.

Clerk Assistant and Clerk of Committees (Ms Deborah Deller): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour has assented:

Bill 20, An Act to promote economic growth and protect the environment by streamlining the land use planning and development system through amendments related to planning, development, municipal and heritage matters / Projet de loi 20, Loi visant à promouvoir la croissance économique et à protéger l'environnement en

rationalisant le système d'aménagement et de mise en valeur du territoire au moyen de modifications touchant des questions relatives à l'aménagement, la mise en valeur, les municipalités et le patrimoine

Bill 35, An Act to amend the Personal Property Security Act / Projet de loi 35, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les sûretés mobilières.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TEACHERS ACT, 1995

LOI DE 1995

SUR L'ORDRE DES ENSEIGNANTES ET DES ENSEIGNANTS DE L'ONTARIO

(continued)

Mr Frank Miclash (Kenora): It gives me great pleasure to participate in this debate. I was also, as was the previous speaker, a former teacher from the system before I came in to represent the riding of Kenora. I must say, as I listened to the debate and to the concerns of teachers throughout the north, throughout my riding, the major concern that comes through, one that's been referred to a good number of times, is the regulation of the College of Teachers.

When we take a look at other bodies, other colleges, whether it be the College of Nurses, the College of Physicians and Surgeons, as has been referred to earlier, the BC College of Teachers, we find that these are all self-regulating bodies. I don't think there's a teacher out there I have spoken to in discussing the College of Teachers who hasn't said that they wished for what the other groups have. They wished no less than to be self-regulating. There have been many points around that and many points that will come back up.

The member for Durham East refers to the committee to which this bill will be referred. I think they will find that as they listen to the many concerns from those in the profession, those like myself and the member for Sudbury who are still part of the profession—myself on leave, and I may go back—we expect no less of the government than to have a self-regulating body.

As I go through the legislation, I take a look at the portion which talks about freedom of information and the protection of privacy. I was here during the Bill 26 deliberations and what the privacy commissioner came forth with in terms of allowing access to personal information and access to personal information by other folks rather than law enforcement, allowing them to collect, to disclose, to use that personal information. It may go beyond what is really reasonable and necessary to achieve what this bill has set out to do, the goals of this bill. I cannot express enough my concerns over that portion of the bill.

As we go into committee, I'm looking for the committee to listen to those folks who will be regulated by the college and find out some of their concerns, as I have in the past. I know this will be of major concern to the teachers who will be presenting when it comes to the erosion of their privacy protection, and Bill 31 certainly leans in that direction.

As we listen to many groups, we must also listen to the people we try to protect when we protect education in this province, those being the students. When you hear about students who are walking out of classes—in my

own riding, for the past two days, we've had students walk out of Dryden High School—you understand that there are major problems in education. Bill 31 is just starting to approach that. As people in the House will know, we're going on to Bill 30 and then Bill 34, where we'll find out that not only do the teachers have problems with the system, but that the students do. From what I was hearing earlier today, there are students across the province who are considering the same steps as those taken by students in my riding over the past two days. As we head into this discussion and into the committee hearings on Bill 31, we're going to hear a lot about what other groups and other people involved in the system are concerned about.

We take a look at discipline. Under Bill 31, we know there will be a discipline committee. That committee will be authorized to conduct public hearings, something that is of great concern to a teacher who is brought forth into a public hearing to determine whether they have acted properly, in a professional manner, whether there has been professional misconduct or incompetence. They are truly worried about that, where these public hearings will be disclosing information about their personal matters, financial matters, information they don't necessarily want out in public. I think when the committee takes a look at this area of the bill, they're going to have to take a very close look as to when the findings of the college become public and become knowledge for the public to get their hands on.

I don't think any type of public hearings in the manner that I speak of will further the goal of enforcing professional and ethical standards through the college on its membership. I really feel strongly that this has no place in terms of the college actions and what it will be set up to do.

1750

The powers of investigation and search and seizure have been raised by a good number of people as they speak about the powers we're giving the council and the registrar of the college. As far as I'm concerned, these are extraordinary powers equal only to those given to law enforcement agents. These powers should not be given to anyone other than professional law enforcement officers to conduct these activities if necessary. That is where the power should lie. We should respect the fact that this has no place for elected or appointed members of a council. I think that will become very clear as we go into the committee hearings and is a change I will be looking forward to.

Let me go back to my experience as a teacher, similar to the member for Sudbury, and explain that there is a compliance the teacher must face. Any time there is a complaint against a teacher, there are a number of routes that complaint will follow. There are many channels, which we've heard about, of course the main channel being to the teacher themselves, if not happy, to the principal, and then there's the superintendent, the director, and of course the trustees. A channel has been set up for any complaints to be taken forth, and these are the people closest to that particular teacher on a daily basis. The college, once it is reviewed, must become the body of final recourse only.

A number of members have talked about the many complaints a principal will receive during a particular week that may get into the superintendent's office, the director's office, the trustees' office. This cannot become a body where complaints are coming forth on a basis where they cannot be handled, where they are overwhelmed by what may be frivolous complaints. That is one aspect of the college that will have to be reviewed very carefully.

I go back to my initial point on the self-regulation. I suggest that the committee must focus on the membership of the college and on ensuring that teachers are properly represented in the college, on the board, so it is a self-regulating body. I can't stress enough the importance of that.

I look forward to the committee hearings on Bill 31. I've had a good number of teachers indicate to me that they will be putting forth their views to the committee, whether it be through their associations or federations or presenting as individuals themselves. I hope the five areas I have addressed here today will be listened to very carefully by all members on the committee. I hope, for the sake of the people who are the most important in any educational debate, whether it be students refusing to attend their classes for various reasons, whether it be cutbacks as they translate to boards, that we all keep that student in mind in our final deliberations.

I look forward to the committee hearings, to that debate, which I know will be a lively one and very informative as we go into the committee hearings. I too, as former speakers have said, feel that if changes are brought forth by the various federations, by the people on the front line, the people in the classrooms, if these changes can be agreed to and we can have amendments to Bill 31, I could find myself supporting that, should these amendments go forth.

I bring forth a view of a former teacher and one who is representing many teachers throughout my riding in northwestern Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon Allan K. McLean): Statements and questions, anybody? Further debate?

Mr Sean G. Conway (Renfrew North): Thank you very much, Mr Speaker, and I want to thank my friend the member for Mississauga South, who has blossomed today like a special Easter flower. It is so good to see her, on a snowy afternoon, looking like an ambassador for the spring we all await.

I want to speak briefly to Bill 31, an act to establish the fact that Bette Stephenson has friends. As a former Minister of Education, I think it would be prudent if I didn't say too much on this subject, and I won't.

Mrs Margaret Marland (Mississauga South): One of the best.

Mr Conway: Margaret, ne'er of the living shall the living judge, to blind the affection, to fresh the grudge.

I do have some constituent concern about certain provisions and I want to take a moment this afternoon to speak to the concern. One of my constituents, Mr Douglas DeLaMatter, a science teacher at my old high school, Madawaska Valley in Barry's Bay, wrote me the other day to express his concern about some of the discipline provisions. I think Mr DeLaMatter, among others, has a good point in this respect.

A number of members have spoken in the debate about other professional associations that are self-governing that have disciplinary mechanisms. Mr DeLaMatter's concern, and I'm sure the minister and the Legislature, in their wisdom, will take these concerns into account, the particular concern of this constituent is, will there be a mechanism that is fair to teachers who may be faced with vexatious accusations—not vexatious, that's the wrong—

Mr Patten: Frivolous.

Mr Conway: The concern here is frivolous. Thank you very much, I say to my friend the member for Ottawa Centre. The concern of teachers I've spoken to is simply that it opens the door to an endless array of frivolous charges. There are 120,000 teachers encountering two million students on a daily basis in this province. There is a concern, and I think it's a legitimate concern, that we not provide a situation whereby frivolous charges are launched, taken up by the discipline committee, extensive hearings incurring substantial costs, that are then assessed against the teacher. That's Mr DeLaMatter's concern and I think it is the concern of other teachers of my acquaintance around the constituency and across the province.

There is much in this bill that I'm sure other members would want to talk about. I have some other observations

but I thought, on behalf of my constituents who have raised this concern, that I would take the opportunity this afternoon to simply make the House, the minister and the committee aware of this concern about a very expensive disciplinary provision, and particularly expensive to teachers who, as I understand the regulations, can be expected to shoulder a substantial cost.

I'm sure it's not the intention of the government or the department to be unfair and/or unreasonable in this respect, but the concern about these frivolous charges that give rise to extensive, lengthy and expensive hearings, the costs of which are going to be borne by the individual teacher or teachers, is a very real concern on behalf of my constituents. I certainly hope and expect that members who deal with this when the matter is referred out to committee will be able to hear the evidence and advise the House generally, when the matter comes back for third reading, that Mr DeLaMatter's concern has been addressed.

The Speaker: It being almost 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until 10 o'clock tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Une liste alphabétique des noms des députés, comprenant toutes les responsabilités de chaque député, figure dans les premier et dernier numéros de chaque session et le premier lundi de chaque mois.

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Clerk / Greffier: Todd Decker

**Regulations and private bills /
Règlements et projets de loi privés**

Chair / Président: Toby Barrett
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: Bruce Smith
Toby Barrett, Gilles Bisson, Dave Boushy, John Hastings,
John R. O'Toole, Trevor Pettit, Gilles Pouliot,
Sandra Papatello, E.J. Douglas Rollins, Tony Ruprecht,
Mario Sergio, Derwyn Shea, Frank Sheehan, Bruce Smith
Clerk / Greffière: Lisa Freedman

**Resources development /
Développement des ressources**

Chair / Président: Steve Gilchrist
Vice-Chair / Vice-Présidente: Barbara Fisher
John R. Baird, Jack Carroll, David Christopherson,
Ted Chudleigh, Marilyn Churley, Dwight Duncan,
Barbara Fisher, Steve Gilchrist, Pat Hoy,
Jean-Marc Lalonde, Bart Maves, Bill Murdoch,
Jerry J. Ouellette, Joseph N. Tascona
Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

Social development / Affaires sociales

Chair / Président: Richard Patten
Vice-Chair / Vice-Président: John Gerretsen
Dominic Agostino, Janet Ecker, John Gerretsen,
Michael Gravelle, Helen Johns, Leo Jordan,
Floyd Laughren, Julia Munro, Dan Newman,
Richard Patten, Trevor Pettit, Peter L. Preston,
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